



A Family in Paris: Stories of Food, Life and Adventure

Jane Paech

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When Australian Jane Paech moves to Paris, her visions of afternoons in bijou bistros and bookshops on the Left Bank are kept in check by the needs of a young family and a long to-do list that includes apartment-hunting, school selection, and multiple trips to IKEA.

Through a collection of sharp observations, insightful travel articles and laugh-out-loud anecdotes, A Family in Paris conveys the joys and difficulties of living in this most famous of cities. It introduces us to the Parisians and their eccentricities, explores the intricate rituals of daily life, and takes us beyond the well-trodden tourist sites to the best eating spots, boutiques, museums and markets that only a local could know about.

Frank, intimate and beautifully photographed, A Family in Paris is about making a home in a strange land, finding a community, and discovering the joy of renewal.

A Family in Paris: Stories of Food, Life and Adventure Details

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Anne Green says

A part-memoir, part-travelogue, written by Jane Paech who spent 6 years living in Paris with her then husband and two young daughters. Delightful read and even if you're not planning to live there, very informative about the Parisian way of life, the "natives" and things you need to know regardless of the time you spend there. Interesting insight into the differences between the Australian and French education systems, which for one of Jane's daughters in particular proved an initially traumatic experience. It's easy to see how over the course of her sojourn in the city of light, Jane fell completely in love with the place, despite the various problems she encountered, and when it came time to leave it was a painful emotional uprooting. However she's since been back and although going back is never the same, it's always good to rediscover old haunts and potentially find new ones.

Jan Polep says

Found this "new book" and took it home to look at the pictures. Read it cover to cover and was fascinated by looking at Paris not as a tourist but from the perspective of a Australian family living in Paris due to job transfer. Who knew...all these fun foodie facts, history stories, idiotic French procedures...all told in a page here, paragraph there and sprinkled all over with websites, pictures, addresses and more. Better than Fodor's or Frommer's and could only be improved on by including a plane ticket.

Indy Fernandez says

Scattered funny anecdotes and a surface insight into daily life in Paris, not much to recommend it otherwise.

John Nebauer says

For many, the thought of living overseas is the dream of a lifetime. Make that location Paris and heads fill with thoughts of food, romance and fine living. Jane Paech did that for six years with her family, and their experiences were chronicled *A Family in Paris: stories of food, life and adventure*.

Chronicled is perhaps not the right word, for the book is thematic rather than strictly sequential. The chapter titles reflect the author's feelings for this magical city. After the first heady impressions of 'we're living' in Paris', disillusion sets in as Paris reveals herself, warts and all. The warts are often a spectacularly unhelpful bureaucracy. Added to that is the pain of trying to adjust to a very different set of assumptions. Finding an apartment takes on a whole new meaning when you have provide your own bench tops, doors and ovens. Waiting for weeks for your husband's employer to approve you buying these things, and a comical (to the reader, but certainly not to the protagonists) back-and-forth battle with the local IKEA to get them fitted would make most of us want to pack our bags and head homewards.

Perhaps the hardest part of any relocation is adjusting to the locals. I may never get used to South Australians meeting newcomers invariably asking which school one attended. In Paris, it's important to learn that when going to dinner, to be a little late, but not too much. More formal occasions demand that guests don't begin drinking until everyone's arrived. In Australia, you'd never find that people respond to 'we must have you around for dinner sometime' with 'thanks, but we have too many friends already'. But Paech's book reminds us that living overseas broadens our horizons. Australian vague offers of dinner can be a politeness not followed through with because those offering most likely already have more friends than they can fit into their busy schedules. I know several newcomers to these shores that have taken such vague offerings at face value and have been disappointed when the proffered (and, at the time sincerely meant) get-togethers didn't materialise. Perhaps Australians place a high priority on making new acquaintances feel at ease, and Parisians letting them know how things stand. Which social practice is better?

The discussion of French education also revealed fascinating divergences in practice. Elder daughter Annabelle found the adjustment from Australian to French education extremely difficult. Teachers often ridiculed students in a way that would be considered bullying here. But French students quite often finish school with a superb knowledge of their own language and culture that makes learning other languages easier. At the end of the book, Paech quotes her daughters' views on the differences. In short, Australia praises kids and tells them that anything is possible; in France, they recognise this isn't possible and try to make students resilient.

This work is not a critique of Parisian society. It is a finely textured personal examination of cultural adjustment. It like a series of love letters revealing the highs and lows of a complex but rewarding relationship. We feel Jane's emotional jolt when finally the time comes to leave. The finale resembles a poignant visit to an old lover. Everything remains largely the same, but is veiled by the past. Add to this the lovely photography that not merely illustrates but adds to the depth of the text and you have a lovely book worth lingering over.

If you are after a travel book, this may not suit you, though there is a lot of useful travel information within. If you prefer sequential narratives, you might find this work a little off-putting. If you are interested in the problems and delights of cultural immersion, you simply must read it. I found Paech's book exquisitely delightful. But then, I am biased for, of course, I love Paris as well.

Liz says

Gorgeous hard book from the library. Photos are so inspiring!

Betsy Morgan says

I absolutely LOVED this book. I have lived in Paris briefly and always wanted to return. This book was extremely enlightening to me. I finished it and instantly felt sad and longed to meet the author and befriend her, a real testament to how winning her voice is. I look forward to reading more of her work and giving this book as a present to my Francophile friends.

Veronica says

This is the living in Paris book I have been trying to find and just happened to pick it up randomly at the library when I was looking for a good book to read. Quelle surprise! I loved her observations and daily life snapshots. It really brought out what I think the real experience of living there with a family would be like and reminded me that I never NEVER want to live there, especially with kids. Visit yes, live in the city proper, no way!

Allyson says

I love this cover, both the dust jacket and underneath.

For anyone familiar with Paris, this is a lot of fun to read and I jotted down many vocabulary words in addition to salient addresses. I was amused by many of her anecdotes and read them aloud to great laughter. She is an engaging and witty recorder of events and situations and I really enjoyed the reading of this in a classy and visually appealing format.

My only criticism is her timeline and how she jumped around chapter or snippet to snippet. While she acknowledges this in small print at the book's end which I read before starting, it still felt gathered after the fact which jarred a little. Given her distance from all that happened, it seems simple laziness on her part not to have stitched it together in a more readable fashion.

But that is really pettiness on my part as it is a good read.

Olwen says

An essential book for anyone moving to Paris to live. Warmly describes the culture, the people, the problems and the beauty. And the all-important tip: Rentals in Paris don't necessarily come with a kitchen!

Susan White-Riggs says

Well, I love Paris, so of course I liked this book. But It was interesting and has lots of stores, restaurants, museums, etc. to help plan a trip to Paris.

Kathryn says

Reading this book is a lovely experience at any time, but it would be an especially great book to read for anyone planning a number of weeks in Paris as the author describes boutiques, cafes, museums, parks etc that are "off the beaten track" which would give a nice, broad Parisian experience - to enable exploration of the haunts of the locals. It is fun to read about the way in which daily life goes on in Paris - the hassles of bureaucracy, the formality of the French, the ways to go about shopping in boutiques, dining out, buying meat at the butcher's, the need to buy bread at least daily (within 6 hours a baguette can be rock hard!), and so on. Complemented by gorgeous photos of food, parks, architecture, monuments, cafés, shops etc, this is a

treat to read!

Bonnie Brandon says

Love this book. It is my bedtime reading. Jane Paech and her family moved from Australia to Paris as expats. The book is a series of vignettes about Jane, her husband and their two preteen daughters adjusting to everyday life as they attempted to settle in. Relatively simple events turn into monumental tasks as a result of language barriers and cultural differences.

At times the book reads like a Frommer's Guide to Paris. Jane documents places that she has frequented and lists them at the end of each chapter. Experiences in shops and restaurants, trip to landmarks, and "don't miss" sights are well described. She speaks lovingly about merchants who have been in business for years and sell their products with pride.

Jane has a way of writing that makes the reader feel like she is speaking directly to them as an old friend. Fun book, loved the ribbon page marker.

kim says

interesting, but a little awkward. it's about a family from Australia that moved to Paris for 6 years, and is half memoir, half travel book -- but there's not enough memoir to really make it interesting, and all the travel details slows it down - but it's also too long and bulky to be a good travel resource. i guess if you were going to go to Paris for a long period of time it would be worth reading -- I've always had a fear of going places where I don't know the language, and this book reinforced my fear of going to Paris because it really gets into the cultural expectations, and how easy it is to say or do the wrong thing - I would not do well!

Carmen says

An Australian family moves to Paris because of the husband's job. This is an account of how they live, manage and discover living in Paris. It has some of the gritty details, but lacks some. The author balances the negatives, like French bureaucracy, with the positives, like the cultural experiences. I really enjoyed all the pictures, just felt that this book had fewer details than I would have liked. There is no account really of how their lives changed because of this experience, and few of how they felt when they went through all the must-sees of Paris.

Michelle says

I enjoyed reading this. It probably helps that I am heading to Paris and am therefore doing research, but regardless, it is still an enjoyable read.

Jane's description of the trials and tribulations of daily life in Paris did make me wonder if I still want to go. The seriousness and intolerance of Parisians (thus described) is an alien mindset to most Aussie (and other)

outsiders. There is no doubt that Paris is a beautiful city, but intimidating too.

This book maybe non fiction, but it is certainly no reference book. It is a hotch potch of events and tales - entertaining but random.

Many have applauded the photography throughout the book. I didn't enjoy it to the same extent.

I did like the quotations chosen to accompany the text and I really like the "Julie calls...." snippets.

Spoiler alert For some inexplicable reason, I was really, really disappointed to read in the epilogue that Jane and Tim got divorced, sometime after returning to Australia. I don't know why it should affect me so.... just imagined that all those trips to Paris Ikea would have been enough to cement any marriage!!
