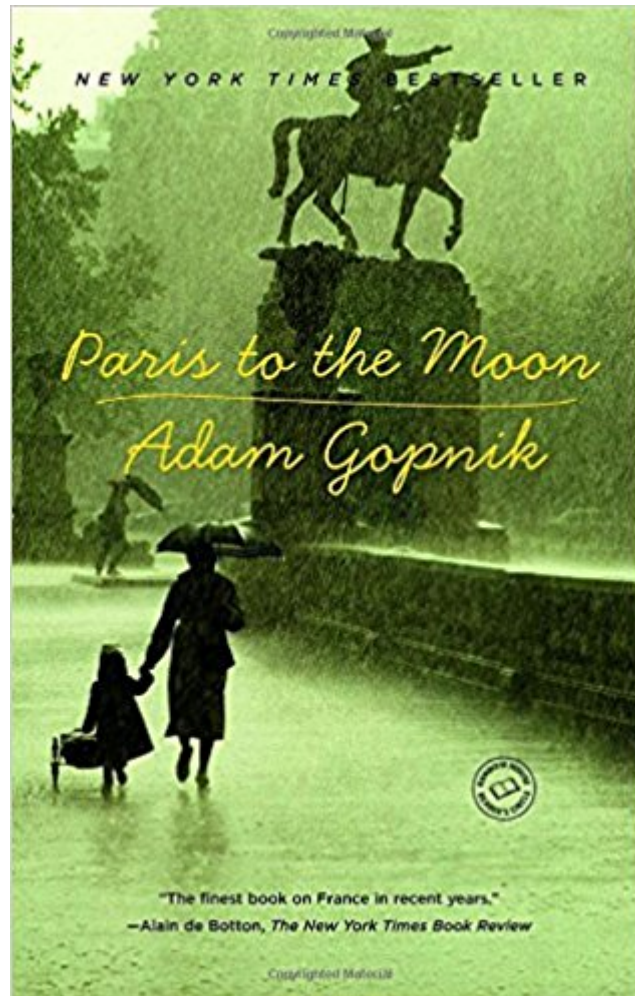




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Paris To The Moon



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Synopsis

Paris. The name alone conjures images of chestnut-lined boulevards, sidewalk caf  s, breathtaking fa  ades 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 caf  --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 Mus  e 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."

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Customer Reviews

In 1995 Gopnik was offered the plush assignment of writing the "Paris Journals" for the New Yorker. He spent five years in Paris with his wife, Martha, and son, Luke, writing dispatches now collected here along with previously unpublished journal entries. A self-described "comic-sentimental essayist," Gopnik chose the romance of Paris in its particulars as his subject. Gopnik falls in unabashed love with what he calls Paris's commonplace civilization--the caf  s, the little shops, the ancient carousel in the park, and the small, intricate experiences that happen in such settings. But Paris can also be a difficult city to love, particularly its pompous and abstract official culture with its parallel paper universe. The tension between these two sides of Paris and the country's general brooding over the decline of French dominance in the face of globalization (haute couture, cooking, and sex, as well as the economy, are running deficits) form the subtexts for these finely wrought and witty essays. With his emphasis on the micro in the macro, Gopnik describes trying to get a Thanksgiving turkey delivered during a general strike and his struggle to find an apartment during a government scandal over favoritism in housing allocations. The essays alternate between reports of national and local events and accounts of expatriate family life, with an emphasis on "the trinity of late-century bourgeois obsessions: children and cooking and spectator sports, including the spectator sport of shopping." Gopnik describes some truly delicious moments, from the rites of Parisian haute couture, to the "occupation" of a local brasserie in protest of its purchase by a restaurant tycoon, to the birth of his daughter with the aid of a doctor in black jeans and a black silk shirt, open at the front. Gopnik makes terrific use of his status as an observer on the fringes of fashionable society to draw some deft comparisons between Paris and New York ("It is as if all American appliances dreamed of being cars while all French appliances dreamed of being telephones") and do some incisive philosophizing on the nature of both. This is masterful reportage with a winning infusion of intelligence, intimacy, and charm. --Lesley Reed --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

In this collection of 23 essays and journal entries, many of which were originally published in the New Yorker, Gopnik chronicles the time he spent in Paris between 1995 and 2000. Although his

subjects are broad: global capitalism, American economic hegemony, France's declining role in the world. He approaches each one via the tiny, personal details of his life as a married expatriate with a small child. In one essay, he deftly reveals the dynamics of France's 1995 general strike by recounting his ordeal buying a Thanksgiving turkey from the local *struck* *tisseur*. In "The Rules of the Sport," he explores the maddening, hilarious intricacies of French bureaucracy by way of a so-called New York-style gym, where his efforts to become a member encounter a wall of meetings, physical examinations and paperwork. Many of the entries, such as "The Fall of French Cooking," focus on how Paris is coping with the loss of its cultural might, and look at others of the inexorable changes brought on by global capitalism. "The Balzar Wars" describes a mini-revolt staged by a group of Parisians (including the author) when their local, family-owned brasserie is purchased by a restaurant tycoon. Throughout, Gopnik is unabashedly sentimental about Paris, yet he never loses the objectivity of his outsider's eye. His "macro in the micro" style sometimes seems a convenient excuse to write about himself, but elegantly woven together with the larger issues facing France, those personal observations beautifully convey a vision of Paris and its prideful, abstract-thinking, endlessly fascinating inhabitants. Although the core readership for this book will most likely be loyal New Yorker subscribers, its thoughtful, funny portrayal of French life give it broad appeal to Francophiles unfamiliar with Gopnik's work. (Oct.) Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.

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I love reading books that tell me a story in a chapter. This is my second year vacationing in Paris and it is books like this that make that time delightful. Reading each chapter is just like taking one little piece of chocolate and letting it melt on your tongue. Each chapter is delicious delicious and worthy of savoring. Reading this book was my preparation for my first trip back to Paris in 15 years last year. I felt completely ready for the journey so much so that I'm returning this year. If you love Paris it's a book you should read

This is collection of essays written by Gopnik, while he was posted to Paris, by the New Yorker Magazine, between 1995 and 2000. Gopnik characterises the French as overly intellectual, valuing wit over humour, valuing theory over practicality; however in the initial essays I thought Gopnik was committing these errors himself. There is an essay about the error messages of French fax machines, which takes the messages as indicative of the French attitude to the world. I found this essay amusing, but overly witty rather than funny, and plausible, if requiring a suspension of disbelief. In fact I thought that Gopnik might fill the essay's with metaphors for France or the

French or Europeans, and I considered giving it up about the Fax essay. In fact, I took up 'The Looming Tower', which I found to be unutterably sad, and found that I returned periodically to Gopnik for some reassurance. The essays themselves revolved around the author's domestic life in Paris, his difficulties getting an apartment, taking his son to the park, taking his son swimming, cooking. He intersperses these with observations on French and American culture. I found the later essays more personal, less analytical, but the writing was just as inviting and gifted as at first. In fact there are two classic essays about Gopnik's efforts, along with a group of concerned citizens, to save their favourite restaurant - the Brasserie Balzac - from being taken over by a (French) conglomerate personified by its owner Jean-Paul Bucher. The manoeuvrings of the plotters, the reaction of the restaurant staff, and the final outwitting of all the above by Bucher are a joy to read. Reading the book, at this remove and along with the Looming Tower, make me think about the fact that Gopnik's essays, witty, amusing, domestic were written at the same time as the threat from Al Queda was emerging, but being underestimated. It made me yearn somewhat for the nineties, when all that seemed to bother us was the personal troubles of the US president. Gopnik returned to New York for the millennium and I believe has a new(ish) book of essays coming out about his time there. I will definitely read them. While I started out being put off by the whimsical content of the essays, in the end I became glad that Western society can create a space for such a talented writer to exercise his craft on such, apparently, slight topics. In reality of course, and Gopnik quotes Maupassant on this, the very familiarity of the tale leads to its being hugely personal and important.

Adam Gopnik is a writer who has lived and worked in Paris and has the added experiences of raising a child there. His insights are poignant and are stated in a way that is entertaining yet insightful. From his own personal experiences he reveals aspects of French culture which shows how hard it can be to fit in, yet, they also show how delightful the French people can be. There are some great stories in here about the issues that only French people would take up as causes to fight over (and I mean that in an endearing way). I have been to Paris numerous times, travel to France regularly, and have some lifelong French friends, and this book is a delightful book for capturing many facets of the culture in a way that will make you smile. I highly recommend it.

This is such a charming book. This is not a tourist guide or nonstop praise for Paris, but just the ins and outs (written by a talented writer) of daily life with wife and child in an enigmatic city. Some things are pretty and some are not, but he really pulls you in, and I found myself chuckling out loud more than once. The characters are easy to identify with.

I felt like I got to live for a while in Paris and I loved every minute. Whenever I want to go back, I listen to or read this book again, a pleasure. Adam Gopnik is a fine writer who brings warmth and humor to his stories.

I've read this book three times and will probably read it again. If you are fond of France, the French and Paris, it's a perfect antidote to the daily news. Adam Gopnik is a good writer and more important a good family man.

One of most concise, non-iconoclastic; yet, poignant chronicles of an American (and most importantly, his family along with him) living all facets of an expatriate. Funny, realistic, and exciting-a work of pure writing. The style of his writing takes each reader along on a unique and less traveled road revealing "la vie ordinaire" of Parisian life. From the idiomatic experience of shopping for appliances to the hilarity of an incongruous health club, the book is a fast favorite of both Francophones or Francophile alike. I've enjoyed it so much, I own a paperback and a hardcover - always searching for other copies to give as gifts to mon amis who truly will appreciate each experience within.

I had a very hard time getting thru this book, even though I just returned from Paris and knew many of the places the author referred to. Definitely not a page turner. It did however give me insight into the "French" way of thinking (the political delays, the strikes, etc). From that perspective worth reading. I also appreciated his style of writing. Los Osos Girl

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