



Paris to the Moon

Adam Gopnik

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From Reader Review Paris to the Moon for online ebook

Paula says

My husband and I decided to be appropriately literary on our last trip to Paris -- he took Hemingway, I took this book because I love travel memoirs. The basic premise is that Gopnik, a writer for the New Yorker, flees to Paris with his family to save his young firstborn from the insidious influence of Barney the dinosaur.

It's well written, more complicated sentence structure than my usual vacation reading but engrossing. It travels an arc beginning with successfully conveying his naivete about the French and ending with his acknowledgement that he now understands very little about the French but more than when he started. It was a lovely accompaniment to a trip in which I think we learned a teeny bit more about the French, or at least about their obsession with reservations for lunch. It would also be a different, more sophisticated choice for an armchair traveller.

Cayt O'Neal says

One of my very favorite reads of all time. Adam Gopnik has a lovely way with words, specifically words that detail everyday, real life. I have found very few writers who have such power to keep me enthralled no matter what the subject matter.

I had the privilege of hearing him lecture a few years back here in Chicago, his topic "The American Dream of Paris." His eloquence astounds me. Hearing him speak only made me wish I could read the book over and over again and forget it each time, so that I would once again have the pleasure of that first read.

Tanya D says

This book was fine, but I didn't particularly enjoy it. I was certainly interested in the subject matter: living in Paris, the expat life, culture clashes, etc. But the author's style is rather long-winded and unnecessarily dense; some passages reminded me of esoteric literary criticism I used to have to read in college, not particularly suited to light observational journalism. Perhaps I'm too critical as I just finished a Bill Bryson book of travel essays that were thoroughly entertaining and often LOL funny. I don't mean to say that I didn't like this book at all or that it was totally uninteresting. It just wasn't much fun.

Another thing: Mr. Gopnik often reiterated that New York was really home. He lived in Paris five years, which is certainly long enough to think of a place as really home, especially when that's all your child has ever known. So for him to keep reminding us that his real home was in New York and this Paris "experience" was just a temporary experiment, I, as an expat myself, felt this made his "expat" experience seem more like an extended vacation. It's a different mindset when you know that you'll be going back to your "normal" life, home, job, friends after a few years as opposed to leaving nothing behind and having no firm plans to return. I kept wondering if he would have seen and written about Paris differently if he wasn't on a temporary assignment but thought of it as his real, long-term home.

Lastly, it felt very dated. So much of his experience was influenced by his job as a journalist, documenting

of-the-moment events. Many times, I'd read something that seemed so off, but then I'd remember that he lived in Paris from 1995-2000. It may not seem like things can be so different in only 10-15 years, but they are.

Aaron says

There's some valuable stuff in this book, but mostly it's a lot of New-Yorker-house-style pseudo-profundity from a writer who's not particularly aware of his own privilege.

Susan Wands says

What a privileged crank. His recent column in the New Yorker about eating locally makes me glad that he is aware of the effects of the world around him but he doesn't seem to appreciate so much of what he has. He was involvement in the bistro takeover and the gym were the highlights of the book, with his difference as the American, but really were these the only times he actually did anything in Paris, other than go to the carousel with son and eat out? I want the New Yorker to sponsor me to live in Florence for five years! I would probably enjoy meeting him as he is very entertaining but he's a lot of work.

Molly says

Enjoyed this more and more as it went on. I've always like Gopnik, but early in this book, he seems overly fixated on sounding clever, which is unnecessary—he's naturally clever. As the book progresses, his tone is more relaxed and funny. Also, it begins as a series of (fairly disjointed) essays, but knits together nicely later when he spends more time on his family and personal experiences in Paris.

Carol says

The first reason this book was written, I believe, was so the author could impress all us ignorant English speakers with his knowledge of French. Actually, he should have just written this book in French and not annoyed us English speakers at all. The second reason was to greatly impress us with having the most perfect and nauseatingly adorable son ever and to tell us about every minute detail of that adorable son's day-to-day existence! Then, of course, we could all just slap our own children silly for being so entirely ordinary in comparison.

This book is so pretentious, I had trouble getting through the first few chapters, and once I reached his discussion of the variety of different wall plugs that exist in this world (which went on for PAGES), I'd had enough! Anyone who believes themselves to be so self-important that they can pass off the discussion of different wall plugs as great writing, and believes that THIS is the drivel that keeps the readers turning the pages, needs a severe reality check.

He seems to have two tasks here: bragging to the reader how much he knows, and talking about his son. The first is pretentious, difficult to read; the latter is arduous to even skim over, impossible to stomach.

With American twits like this in France, no wonder the French hate us. The writing style was also annoying and jumped from one random thought to another. I

Thomas says

A very uneven book - some essays are excellent, heartfelt, incisive, clever - others are smug, condescending, boring - the book does not ultimately come together as a unified whole. And, in the end, I just don't entirely trust Gopnik - in some of his other New Yorker essays when he touches on subjects about which I have some in-depth knowledge (such as C.S. Lewis, Christianity etc.), I often find he leaps to unwarranted and seemingly pre-determined conclusions - and so I am skeptical (perhaps unfairly so) of some of his judgments and evaluations in *Paris to the Moon*.

Kelly says

This book is actually a collection of essays from the New Yorker, and they're very insightful. His arguments mostly stem from his own family's experiences and are naturally just small scenes from which he draws grand conclusions. Like most other authors.

However, his awareness of the political scene and the major infighting going on culturally speaks of a very sharp mind. His essays have enough political analysis to show his intelligence, but then will transition into a colorful story about his son. One essay is about Adam Gopnik and his wife's attempts to keep Barney out of his son's life, and it's absurd, but it makes its point.

In other words, a lot of it is fanciful, but in a charming almost fin de siecle style that I just adore. If you know anything about French culture, you'll laugh many times. :)

Stefanie says

I can't say enough positive things about this book. Such intricate descriptions of such small things... you can savor it the way the French would want you to. It's a story of a beautiful life in a far away place-- but Gopnick tells it in a way that makes it so accessible (sometimes even ordinary) that he achieves an intimacy that I have not experienced in most books I've read. He also offers a social lens that is stimulating as well as enlightening.

I purposefully took forever reading this book because I didn't want my trip to France to end!

Kara says

I have to be honest. I bought this book because I liked the title. Then I got sucked in by the back cover. Who doesn't think the idea of running away w/ your adult family to Paris wouldn't be fantastic? Gopnik is excellent at revealing the subtle differences between life in the States and France that make up two completely separate cultures. I felt upon finishing the book that I actually knew the secrets of French thought

and behavior. Unfortunately, I now know exactly why I'd never be able to blend in perfectly - my passion for sneakers would sell me out!

Entwined with the journalistic entries of his five years in Paris, Gopnik fills the pages with real life and lots of romance that one hopes for in a story about Paris. And not the coupley type of romance, but the kind that makes it possible to fall in love w/ a city.

If I ever get to give my two cents in a European Cities and Culture class, I would make this part of the required reading.

My favorite quote from the book because it reveals how culture is prominently defined, even in toddlers: Luke, the Gopnik's 4 yr old son, who has only lived in Paris and as such is more French than American and more French than his parents, says the following to his mother upon seeing Santa buying champagne on Christmas Eve while out for last minutes holiday touches w/ his father.

"We saw Santa at Hediard. I think he was just getting a little cheap wine for the elves."

You could never get even the most precocious American child to say it quite the same way. As if they're worldly and 40 at the age of 4.

Otis Chandler says

A fun book that gives you a sense of living in Paris as an expat and what to appreciate about French culture. Narrated by the author so definitely recommend listening. Great read while on vacation in France. I loved many of the anecdotes were hilarious - eg the one about how the gym had no plan for visiting every day they only had a once a week plan. Or the one comparing the French fax error codes to French culture.

Cristin Curry says

Adam Gopnik's memoirs of his times spent in Paris is a Sex and the City for grown ups. Seen through a male perspective, Gopnik's Frasier-like love of France, the arts, fine food and wine and a hatred for cheesy American pop culture (AKA Barney) allows anyone who's ever dreamed of dropping everything and leaving for a more romantic lifestyle the ability to do so vicariously through his family. What's refreshing about Gopnik's writing is that he realizes he's living a ridiculously privileged life where his only problem is keeping his favorite restaurant safe from being taken over by a mass corporation of restaurant buyers. What keeps him grounded is knowing that he can't live this lifestyle forever and must return to NY after five years and get back to the real world. Paris to the Moon brings the reader into the lives of the Gopniks as you experience their everyday Parisian lifestyle and their fantasy lives by visiting them at Christmas time in French department stores, summertime swimming at the Ritz pool club, mingling at Parisian fashion shows, playing pinball at the local cafe, and riding the carousel at the Luxembourg Gardens. I loved this book and would highly recommend it to anyone looking to get away from it all and slip into a snobby fantasy without losing yourself completely.

Rebecca Foster says

(3.5) "When they die, Wilde wrote, all good Americans go to Paris. Some of us have always tried to get there early and beat the crowds." Gopnik, a Francophile and *New Yorker* writer, lived in Paris for five years in the late 1990s with his wife and son (and, towards the end of their sojourn, a newborn daughter). Like Julian

Barnes's *Something to Declare* or Geoff Dyer's *Working the Room*, this is a random set of essays arising from the author's experience and interests. By choosing any subject that took his fancy at the time – whether the World Cup, a Nazi war crimes trial, fashion, or gastronomy – Gopnik gleefully flouts conventions of theme and narrative, yet still manages to convey the trajectory of his years in Paris, generally through his young son Luke's development, as in "He saw, I realized, exactly the way that after five years I spoke French, which also involved a lot of clinging to the side of the pool and sudden bravura dashes out to the deep end to impress the girls, or listeners."

Gopnik is at his best when writing about food (my favorite of his books is *The Table Comes First*) and bureaucracy: "The French birth certificate was like the first paragraph of a nineteenth-century novel, with the baby's parents' names, their occupations, the years of their births and of their emigration, their residence, and her number, baby number 2365 born in Neuilly in 1999." It's interesting to hear about Halloween creeping into France, as it's also done in the UK. In places, though, this does feel exceptionally dated: relying on a copy shop to do the household bills; David Beckham only being engaged to Posh Spice at the time of a World Cup game. What's timeless, though, are his insights about the ambivalence of the expatriate experience, which certainly resonated for me:

The loneliness of the expatriate is of an odd and complicated kind, for it is inseparable from the feeling of being free, of having escaped.

There are times, as one reads about the uninsured and the armed and the executed, when French anti-Americanism begins to look extremely rational.

It is soup, beautiful soup, that I miss more than anything, not French soup, all puréed and homogenized, but American soup, with bits and things, beans and corn and even letters, in it.

"We have a beautiful existence in Paris, but not a full life," Martha said, summing it up, "and in New York we have a full life and an unbeautiful existence."

I must thank my Goodreads friend Ted Schmeckpeper for passing this book along to me.

Margaret says

Gopnik spent five years living in Paris with his wife and his small son, writing articles for the *New Yorker* on life in Paris; this book collects many of those articles along with some of Gopnik's personal journals from that period. I found *Paris to the Moon* finely written and frequently witty, and I quite liked the mix of personal reminiscence and social and cultural commentary. Though I can see how those expecting a book about Paris might find that there's too much of the former, I thought it was nicely balanced.
