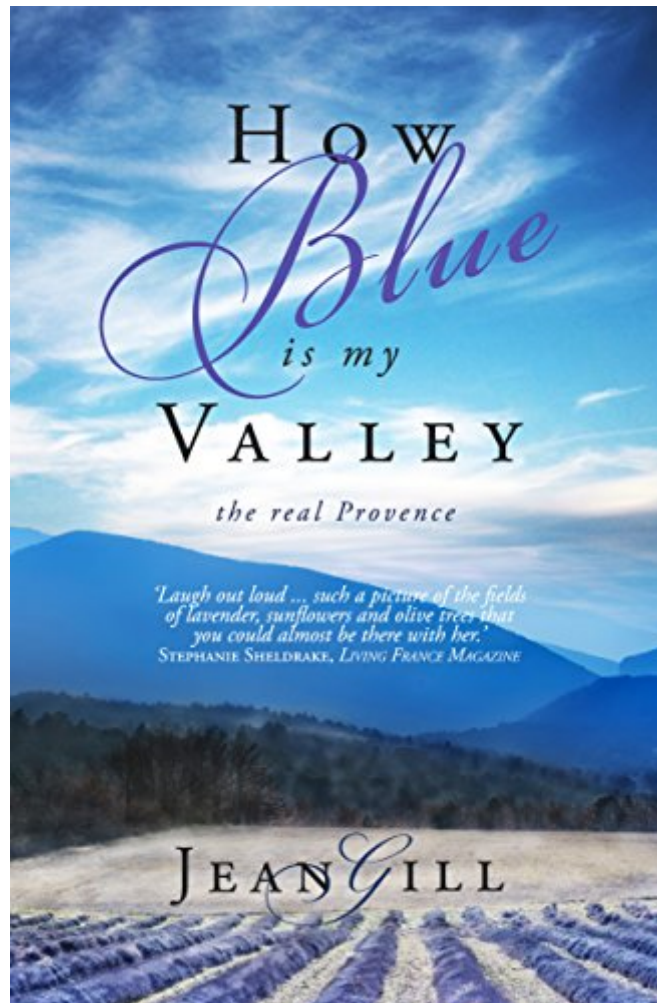




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How Blue Is My Valley: The Real Provence



Synopsis

Humorous travel book about moving to France from IPPY and Global Ebook Award Winner Jean Gill 'Laugh out loud ... such a vivid picture of the fields of lavender, sunflowers and olive trees that you could almost be there with her.' - Living France Magazine The true scents of Provence? Lavender, thyme and septic tank. There are hundreds of interesting things you can do in a bath but washing dishes is not one of them, nor what writer Jean Gill had in mind when she swapped her Welsh Valley for a French one. Keen to move out of the elephant's stomach, that stew of grey mists called weather in Wales, she offered her swimming certificate to a bemused Provencal estate agent and bought a house with good stars and its own spring-water. Or rather, as it turns out, a neighbour's spring-water that is the only supply to the kitchen, which, according to the nice men from the Water Board, is emptying its dirty water directly and illegally onto the main road... and there's worse ... But how can you resist a village called Dieulefit, 'God created it', the village 'where everyone belongs'. Discover the real Provence in good company. Watch the trailer youtube.com/watch?v=o_Rrn4CGw5A

Book Information

File Size: 3173 KB

Print Length: 206 pages

Publisher: The 13th Sign (March 20, 2008)

Publication Date: March 20, 2008

Sold by: Â Â Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B004C05BXA

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Screen Reader: Supported

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #302,355 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #6

in Â Â Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Nonfiction > Travel > Europe > Great Britain > Wales #27

in Â Â Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Nonfiction > Travel > Specialty Travel > Literary #32

in Â Â Books > Travel > Europe > France > Provence

Customer Reviews

If you have traveled France or will travel France sometimes soon, or if you are into house renovations, you should read this book. "How Blue is my Valley: the real Provence" by Jean Gill will tell you about what living in Southern France is really like, aside from it's gorgeous lavender fields, it's charming country roads and its friendly inhabitants. An extra compliment has to be paid to the creative handymen, even though they don't always show up too quickly. An avid home renovator myself I just laughed and laughed about author Jean Gill's adventures; though there are the general contractors, electricians and the chimney sweeper, I favored Jean's and her plumbers' (on occasion two have to show up) adventures with the plumbing system. Obviously, Jean Gill's new house receives well water for free, but the in the winter when temperatures can reach freezing temps more than one problem present themselves. Why is this funny, you may ask. Because poor Jean has to handle her investigation in a foreign language. Having immigrated to country where my mother language is not being spoken, I know this type of problem firsthand; while all of us learn the vocabulary we need to carry on typical conversations, relatively rapidly, talking about plumbing problems or sewage pipes just isn't on anybody's list of typical conversations. One has such little opportunity to practice the vocabulary. Jean Gill has another favorite topic, which happens to be also another one of my favorite topics - goat cheese. I love goat cheese and was excited to find out that the "... Picodon *À l'ancienne* - a small cheese in Provence *À l'ancienne* - even travelled into space on an Apollo mission..." But, of course there is more. "... If you want to visit a graveyard to make your spirits soar - and break your heart - go to what must be the most beautiful cemetery in the world, at Saint Christophe aux Oisans. If you are not driving, you might enjoy the view sheer down mountains as the road twists through the Alps up to a tiny village legendary for its great mountain guides, who led the rich nineteenth century adventurers, particularly from Britain and Switzerland, enabled them to conquer a peak and, more importantly, to return safely *À l'ancienne* - usually..." Though on occasion a bit choppy, Jean Gill's account of why she left rainy and damp Wales (UK) for Southern France is charming. Jean Gill manages to present life's daily adventures, which are intensified by looking for the "right word" or not understanding local practices, in such a charming way, that the reader can see the beauty in the little things and the breathtaking adventure. There is also the change of lifestyle, "... Already, I am Frenchified enough to want to touch produce before I buy it; it would be a brave stall-holder in Welsh market who yelled *À l'ancienne* - Come and try my melons *À l'ancienne* - and yet I don't think twice now about taking morsels of melon, cheese and sausage from an outstretched hand and savouring them as I shop..." Reading the book reminded me of my own trip to Southern France thirty

some years ago, and I loved it. BTW, Jean, regarding your words, "... The weekly offering looks remarkably like ready-mix concrete, comes in an unlabelled sachet from a firm unwilling to divulge the ingredients of the magic potion but confident that it will prevent the *ÄfÂçÄ â ÑÄ ÆœboueÄfÂçÄ â ÑÄ â„ç* or *ÄfÂçÄ â ÑÄ ÆœmudÄfÂçÄ â ÑÄ â„ç* from building up in your *ÄfÂçÄ â ÑÄ Æœfosse septiqueÄfÂçÄ â ÑÄ â„ç*. I know what "the ingredients of the magic potion" are: Yeast. Put yeast into warm water, allow the yeast to rise, and flush it down the toilet once every two to four weeks. It'll clean the pipes (because the yeast bacteria will "eat away" anything that's not supposed to be in the pipes, plus it'll take care of your septic tank and you may never have to have it cleaned out. A Cuban handyman told me in- Cuban Spanglish (You can probably guess how that conversation went.). Viva la Provence! Gisela Hausmann, author & blogger

This is the type of book I love reading. The author has lived in various places and before moving to this tiny village in Provence lived for quite some time in Wales. While she experiences difficulties during renovation projects to their house, she is very fair minded and also praises the French workers for returning calls and for working hard when they do. They love going to the various markets and enjoy the special festivities or fairs that take place in the surrounding area. She has a wonderful sense of humor and the book is just a joy to read.

This is a funny story, or autobiography, depending on how you want to view it. Jean describes her conversion from Welsh to French, the trials and tribulations of trying to speak a language where extremely slight errors in speaking a vowel, or combinations of vowels, produce looks of surprise on the face of the recipients of the conversation (I would say communication, but that implies that both parties understand each other). To the non-French speaker, all those spoken variations sound the same. I found the experience of moving into, and remodeling, a new home, well maybe not so new, to be an exercise in frustration for all concerned. I could hear her speaking the words as I read them, and I have never heard her speak a word, neither Welsh nor French.

The title states, "the real Provence", yet why did everything discuss Wales? The part about Provence, the resistance, etc. was very interesting. Wales, not so much. Why doesn't the author talk about the real Wales in one book and the real Provence in another? I skimmed the last 40% of the book and only read the parts about Provence.

Warning: This is not a book to read with a cup of anything hot in your hand, food in your mouth,

running on a treadmill, or while engaging in any other activity where a sudden burst of laughter and loss of control could render you injured. I speak from experience having lost my footing and rolled off the back of the health club treadmill. This book had me at "Every Sunday we feed the toilet." An entertaining and thoughtful story of the transition from one country to another, adapting from one culture to a very different one, the trials of learning a new language (with some hysterical faux pas along the way), and making an old house a new home, made all the more challenging (and funny) by the complications of a new culture and language. Wonderful "you are there" descriptions of the country, the lavender, olive trees and sunflower. It made me laugh so many times, and it made me envision places I'd not been. An entertaining and truly interesting read!

I read this book as a prelude to an upcoming trip to southern France, and I am glad I did. There is no gripping plot, no story line, and no attempt to make her story anything other than a humorous observation to everyday life as a transplant to her new environment. It did prepare me for a better appreciation of my pending travels.

A slight disappointment, with this book. As I am of French background and understand the mentality, especially from various parts of regional France, I was hoping for more anecdotes relating to their settlement in the region.. too much talk and comparison with Wales, where I have never been, I must say, but sure would consider visiting...if only I lived on that side of the world..there are some very funny quotes, where I laughed outloud, but then we go back to Wales.... and it's a real flop... very strange way of sharing her experiences not a very flowingly readable book.. but then again, I am not a writer..

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