



Pardon My French: How a Grumpy American Fell in Love with France

Allen Johnson

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To make a friend is a joy. To make a friend in another country is a wonderment—a small miracle. *Pardon My French* follows an American author who has embraced a daunting mission: not to be a spectator in France but an enthusiastic participant—fully engaged, fully alive.

In France, Johnson is like an alien from another planet. Everything is strange to him. His goal is to speak French without going to prison, drive without being squashed like a bug, dance the tango without losing his marriage, and belt out a tune with a world-class jazz combo without being booed off the stage.

Repeatedly, the author fearlessly steps into harm's way. He joins a summer acting troop and witnesses the French version of sexual liberation. He pits his rather staid and conventional driving skills against the French speed demons of Languedoc. He tries to be cool in a painting class while sputtering nervously in front of the nude model with the long legs and silky voice.

And then, after it all—after the splendor of Christmas on the Mediterranean, the bicycle tours along the French canals, the mountain treks amply supplied with French bread, cheese, and wine—the miracle happens. The often self-deprecating and bungling American meets and falls in love with a beautiful mistress: La belle France. And when he does, an entire village adopts him into a new family—one with a gracious heart and a beautiful French accent.



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