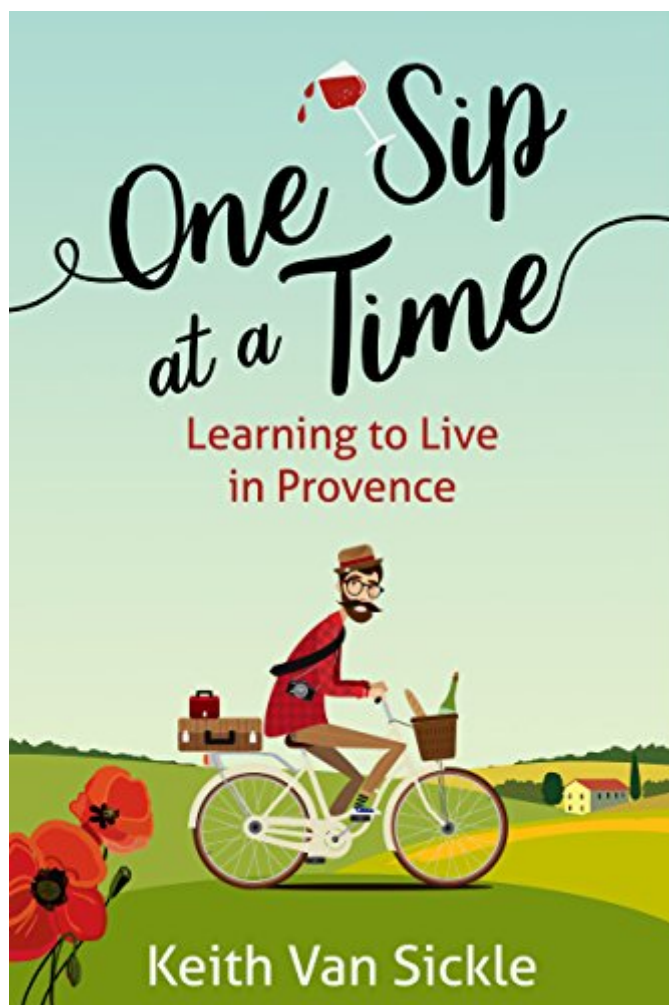


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One Sip At A Time: Learning To Live In Provence



Synopsis

Keith and Val had a dream - to live in Provence, the land of brilliant sunlight, charming hilltop villages and the deep blue waters of the Mediterranean. But there were two problems: they weren't French speakers and they had full-time jobs. So they came up with a plan... Follow their adventures (and misadventures) as they quit their jobs, become consultants and split their time between two countries. Laugh along as they build a life in Provence, slowly mastering a new language and making friends with the locals over long meals and just a bit too much wine. This light and breezy memoir is full of wry observations on France, like the power of cheese to sway elections, the right and wrong ways for men to kiss each other, and the sexiness of fava beans. If you've ever dreamed of changing gears and learning what *joie de vivre* is really all about, you won't want to miss this delightful book.

From the Book *Joyeux Anniversaire*: The chef had written a cookbook and I bought one for Val, which he signed. His inscription read, "*Valérie, vous êtes jeune et délicate comme les fèves du printemps*" ("Valerie, you are young and delicious like the fava beans of springtime.") . . . I had so much to learn from the French.

How to Kiss a Frenchman: Here, not far from where we had stayed the year before, it was two kisses on the cheek rather than three. How were we supposed to know this? Was there a border we had crossed but somehow missed the sign? ("Welcome to Eastern Provence. Please Follow the Local Kissing Regulations. And Enjoy Your Lunch, Especially the Asparagus, Which is Delicious Right Now.")

A Night at the Opera: There are many words that are the same in French and English, like nation, pause, and danger. If I don't know a word in French, sometimes I will just fake it by using the English word with a French accent. It works most of the time. But you have to be careful. There are words that exist in both languages and have entirely different meanings. These are the infamous *faux amis*, or "false friends." Ask Val about the time she shocked her co-workers by talking about preservatives in food. Oops, preservative means "condom."

Interregnum: France had started to capture our hearts. It wasn't just a place we visited; it was becoming one of the places we lived. Thomas Jefferson is supposed to have said, "Every man has two countries - his own and France." Maybe he was on to something.

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Customer Reviews

What a delightful little read this one is. My wife and I have been traveling and living in different areas of the country and world since we were first married in 1962 and both are entertained and enlightened by stories of others who share our compulsive travel behavior....yes, we are still at it. This work is the experiences the author and his wife have had living in Provence, France, on and off again for extended periods. It is written in a lighthearted and humorous manner but thank goodness lacks the somewhat over the top caustic and sarcastic wit of writers such as Bill Bryson and his ilk. The author is able to laugh at himself and actually gives quite a good and accurate account of the average American who tries to immerse themselves into another culture. It should be noted that this couple started there extended adventure without the ability to speak the native language...and in France that is a real handicap! Insightful comments are made of food, culture, traffic, living conditions, food and wine and did I mention food? Intermingled with the author's observations is some very good advice and tips for those who may be contemplating living for an extended period of time in another country and interact with another and different culture. Very valuable information here which is spot on! Our last extended stay in another country was Turkey and while Turkey is far different than France; still the problems and delights are much the same...I suppose they are universal in that aspect. This is a rather fast read and smoothly written. Were I to whine about anything it would be the fact that I would have enjoyed more of the same.

What a great, exciting and fun read. As one who has struggled and stumbled through a similar life transition into a new country, I can entirely relate, and laugh, at the author's steps and missteps along the way. Moving from the top priority being "getting to work on time," to the new priority of "getting to the boulangerie before they run out of butter croissants," can be trying, but oh so worth it in the end. I salute Keith and Val for their vision of a new, simple and magical life, and for their good humor and perseverance to get there. Of course, they had a lot of help along the way from their marvelous new French friends. Get and read it. You'll be smiling for days.

Keith has a marvelous way to describe the environment and experience of learning both a new language and a different culture. The book is an easy read of a very tough transition for anyone who decides to relocate to a country with a different way of life, diet and daily tasks. Definitely a must read for anyone who is in love with France and wants to vicariously experience the travels and travails of a couple of Americans in France.

Just a few pages into *One Sip at a Time* it becomes apparent that author Keith Van Sickle has an aptitude for misadventure. This catalog of his mishaps and faux pas gives anyone planning to spend time in Provence a how-to on expecting the unexpected. It's easy to picture Peter Sellers starring in Van Sickle's vignettes, but mixed with the humor of his hapless experiences is good advice. Want a look into the hearts and minds of the Provençaux, find the trove of towns and villages overlooked in conventional travel guides, taste the delicious fruits and vegetables they grow and sell in their open-air markets, or partake of the area's wines from little-known locales? Start with this little book. Want that savior-faire look of confidence in your everyday dealings in Provence? Then read on and learn how to drive like the locals in their busy town squares and remote village lanes, as if you owned the roads; how to exchange bises with friends, a French cheek-kissing requirement that has its own conventions in Provence; how to locate the aspirin section in a French pharmacy, more of a treasure hunt than it should be; and how to order bread in the corner boulangerie, with the exactness of a Provence housewife. It's all here. What's not explicit but evident throughout *One Sip at a Time* is the genuine affection that Keith and Val Van Sickle feel for the people of Provence, their language and their customs. The couple teaches by example how to find that enviable-but-often-elusive French *joie de vivre* in this sunny southeast corner of France. Their secrets are shared subtly in this book, but thoughtful readers can learn them...by heart.

I thoroughly enjoyed this charming and delightful book. Van Sickle has a wonderful, witty style in

which to describe the eccentricities of French life in Provence, as well as the the peculiar essence of what it means to be French. The book is written in a numerous series of short vignettes, most only a page or two. But like a skilled photographer, he captures a number of snapshots of French life and highlights the contradictions of life in the French countryside with that of our own hectic pace in the United States. I can't wait for his next adventure!

My wife and I love spending time in Provence, and it has become our favorite travel destination. We have been able to explore many of its attractions and never tire of the landscape, architecture, food, culture, and weather. But we've always been visitors that ultimately pack up and head home. We've often wondered what living in Provence would be like. Keith Van Sickle's book provides a very entertaining answer to that question. Combining his powers of observation with a keen sense of humor and love for the region, Van Sickle has produced a delightful book that captures the essence of living in Provence. From the early days of learning the language and making friends in the community to learning the secrets of living the good life in Provence, Van Sickle's adventures with his wife are nonstop. A great read and inspiration to those of us that love Provence.

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