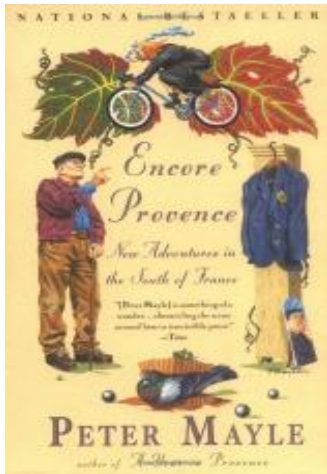


Encore Provence

by Peter Mayle



About the Book

For a time, Francophile extraordinaire Peter Mayle left the South of France and the pleasures and the pastimes he has chronicled to international renown. But not a day passed without a pang of longing for the home he had left behind. And so he returned to France and fell in love all over again with la vie Provençale.

In **Encore Provence**, Mayle presents his most appealing tribute to date on the joys of Gallic life. Here is a glimpse into the secrets of the truffle trade, a parfumerie lesson on the delicacies of scent, an exploration of the genetic effects of 2,000 years of foie gras, and a small-town murder mystery that reads like the best fiction. Here, too, are Mayle's latest tips on where to find the best honey, cheese, or chambre d'hôte the region has to offer. Lyric, insightful, sparkling with detail, *Encore Provence* brings us a land where the smell of thyme in the fields or the glory of a leisurely lunch is no less than inspiring.

Discussion Guide

1. Mayle writes "Memory is a notoriously biased and sentimental editor, selecting what it wants to keep and invariably making a few cosmetic changes to past events" [p 6]. Do you think this is true of your own memories of favorite times and places?
2. How do Mayle's experiences in America sharpen his appreciation of Provence? Why does he cite the bustling, colorful country markets as the best example of what he missed most during his time in America [p. 14]? How do the markets embody what he loves about Provence?

3. What insights does Marius's story about the murder of the handsome butcher give you into the ways of life in a small French village? How does his detailed scenario of his own death shed light on the traditions and values of Provence [p. 173-5]?

4. How does Mayle's "recipe for a village" compare to your own version of an ideal spot? Do you think it is possible to find such a place in America, or have we "advanced" too far to reclaim the kind of simple pleasures Mayle finds in abundance in Provence?

5. Discuss Mayle's sharp attack on Ruth Reichl's assessment of Provence [p. 38-43]. Is he overly defensive about his beloved home or do you think that Reichl, a well-known critic, in fact failed to prepare herself properly for her trip and lacked the curiosity and the skills to seek out all that Provence has to offer?

6. Mayle offers "Eight Ways to Spend a Summer Afternoon." Which of Mayle's recommendations appeal to you the most and why? What other outings described in the book--for example, the trip to the olive oil factory--would you add to your list of things to do while in Provence?

7. Do Mayle's descriptions of the people he meets conform to the impressions you may have formed on visits to France or through books and movies? Mayle suggests that the leisurely pace of life, the sunshine, and the abundance of the south encourage the general good humor and cheerfulness of the Provenceaux [p. 12]. Do you think a similar dichotomy between north and south exists in this country?

Author Bio

A recipient of the Légion d'Honneur from the French government for his cultural contributions, Peter Mayle has been living in Provence with his wife, Jennie, for more than 25 years.

Critical Praise

"Delightful, amusing, and appealing. "

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