ODYSSEY TRAVELLER

Rural France | Small Group Tour for Senior

Recommended reading for your journey

01

The History of Modern France: From the Revolution to the War on Terror

Jonathan Fenby

With the defeat of Napoleon Bonaparte at the Battle of Waterloo in June 1815, the next two centuries for France would be tumultuous. Bestselling historian and political commentator Jonathan Fenby provides an expert and riveting journey through this period as he recounts and analyses the extraordinary sequence of events of this period from the end of the First Revolution through two others, a return of Empire, three catastrophic wars with Germany, periods of stability and hope interspersed with years of uncertainty and high tensions. As her cross-Channel neighbour Great Britain would equally suffer, France was to undergo the wrenching loss of colonies in the post-Second World War as the new modern world we know today took shape. Her attempts to become the leader of the European union is a constant struggle, as was her lack of support for America in the two Gulf Wars of the past twenty years. Alongside this came huge social changes and cultural landmarks but also fundamental questioning of what this nation, which considers itself exceptional, really stood - and stands - for. That saga and those questions permeate the France of today, now with an implacable enemy to face in the form of Islamic extremism which so bloodily announced itself this year in Paris. Fenby will detail every event, every struggle and every outcome across this expanse of 200 years. It will prove to be the definitive guide to understanding France.

02

How the French Think: An Affectionate Portrait of an Intellectual People

Sudhir Hazareesingh

Sudhir Hazareesingh’s How the French Think is a warm yet incisive exploration of the French intellectual tradition, and its exceptional place in a nation’s identity and lifestyle Why are the French an exceptional nation? Why do they think they are so exceptional? An important reason is that in France intellectual activity is regarded not just as the preserve of the thinking elite but for almost everyone. French thought can sometimes be austere and often opaque, yet it is undeniably bold and innovative, and driven by a relentless quest for the regeneration of humanity. Sudhir Hazareesingh traces its tumultuous history in an enormously enjoyable and highly original manner, showing how the French ways of thought and life connect. This will be one of the most revealing books written about them - or any other European country - for years.

Sudhir Hazareesingh was born in Mauritius. He is a Fellow of the British Academy and has been a Fellow and Tutor in Politics at Balliol College, Oxford, since 1990. Among his books are The Legend of Napoleon (Granta, 2004) and Le MytheGaullien (Gallimard, 2010). He won the Prix du Memorial d'Ajaccio and the Prix de la Fondation Napoleon for the first of these, and a Prix d'Histoire du Senat for the second.

03

The Discovery of France

Graham Robb

Ten years ago, I began to explore the country on which I was supposed to be an authority . . . France is a country famous for its intellectuals, its philosophers and writers, its fashion, food and wine. And yet the notion of 'the French' as one nation is relatively recent and - historically speaking - quite misleading. In order to discover the 'real' past of France, Graham Robb realised it was not only necessary to go back in time, but also to go at a slower pace than modern life generally allows. The Discovery of France, illuminating, engrossing and full of surprises, is the result of Robb's 14,000 mile journey across France on a bicycle. Winner of both the Duff Cooper and the Royal Society of Literature Ondaatje prizes, The Discovery of France is a modern non-fiction classic, a literary exploration of a remarkable nation. From maps and migration to magic, language and landscape, it reveals a France few will recognize.

04

Napoleon the Great

Andrew Roberts

From Andrew Roberts, author of the Sunday Times bestseller The Storm of War, this is the definitive modern biography of Napoleon It has become all too common for Napoleon Bonaparte's biographers to approach him as a figure to be reviled, bent on world domination, practically a proto-Hitler. Here, after years of study extending even to visits paid to St Helena and 53 of Napoleon's 56 battlefields, Andrew Roberts has created a true portrait of the mind, the life, and the military and above all political genius of a fundamentally constructive ruler. This is the Napoleon, Roberts reminds us, whose peacetime activity produced countless indispensable civic innovations - and whose Napoleonic Code provided the blueprint for civil law systems still in use around the world today. It is one of the greatest lives in world history, which here has found its ideal biographer. The sheer enjoyment which this book will give anyone who loves history is enormous.

05

The French Revolution

Christopher Hibbert

Concise, convincing and exciting, this is Christopher Hibbert s brilliant account of the events that shook eighteenth-century Europe to

its foundation. With a mixture of lucid storytelling and fascinating detail, he charts the French Revolution from its beginnings at an impromptu meeting on an indoor tennis court at Versailles in 1789, right through to the coup d etat that brought Napoleon to power ten years later. In the process he explains the drama and complexities of this epoch-making era in the compelling and accessible manner he has made his trademark. Writing in The Times, Richard Holmes described the book as A spectacular replay of epic action while The Good Book Guide called it, Unquestionably the best popular history of the French Revolution .

06

France: A History: from Gaul to de Gaulle

John Julius Norwich

I can still feel, as if it were yesterday, the excitement of my first Channel crossing (as a child of nearly 7) in September 1936; the regiment of porters, smelling asphyxiatingly of garlic in their blue-green blousons; the raucous sound all around me of spoken French; the immense fields of Normandy strangely devoid of hedges; then the Gare du Nord at twilight, the policemen with their kØpis and their little snow-white batons; and my first sight of the Eiffel Tower...This book is written in the belief that the average English-speaking man or woman has remarkably little knowledge of French history. We may know a bit about Napoleon or Joan of Arc or Louis XIV, but for most of us that's about it. In my own three schools we were taught only about the battles we won: CrØcy and Poitiers, Agincourt and Waterloo. The rest was silence. So here is my attempt to fill in the blanks... John Julius Norwich (at 88) has finally written the book he always wanted to write, the extremely colourful story of the country he loves best. From frowning Roman generals and belligerent Gallic chieftains, to Charlemagne (hated by generations of French children taught that he invented schools) through Marie Antoinette and the storming of the Bastille to Vichy, the Resistance and beyond, FRANCE is packed with heroes and villains, adventures and battles, romance and revolution. Full of memorable stories and racy anecdotes, this is the perfect introduction to the country that has inspired the rest of the world to live, dress, eat -- and love better.

07

Becoming Bourgeois: Love, Kinship, and Power in Provincial France, 1670 1880

Christopher H Johnson

Becoming Bourgeois traces the fortunes of three French families in the municipality of Vannes, in Brittany Galles, Jollivet, and Le Ridant who rose to prominence in publishing, law, the military, public administration, and intellectual pursuits over the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Revisiting complex issues of bourgeois class formation from the perspective of the interior lives of families, Christopher H. Johnson argues that the most durable and socially advantageous links forging bourgeois ascent were those of kinship.

Economic success, though certainly derived from the virtues of hard work and intelligent management, was always underpinned by marriage strategies and the diligent intervention of influential family members. Johnson's examination of hundreds of personal letters opens up a whole world: the vicissitudes of courtship; the centrality of marriage; the depths of conjugal love; the routines of pregnancy and the drama of childbirth; the practices of child rearing and education; the powerful place of siblings; the role of kin in advancing the next generation; tragedy and deaths; the enormous contributions of women in all aspects of becoming bourgeois; and the pleasures of gathering together in intimate soirØes, grand balls, country houses, and civic and political organizations. Family love bound it all together, and this is ultimately what this book is about, as four generations of rather ordinary provincial people capture our hearts.

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