



France on Foot

Bruce LeFavour

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It stands to reason that an author with a passion for gourmet cooking (he has owned and operated numerous restaurants) would also relish the opportunity to reveal a thorough description of France from the paths of the sentiers de grande randonne, France's elaborate system of footpaths that have been around for literally hundreds of years. The subtitle of his book, Village to Village, Hotel to Hotel: How to Walk the French Trail System on Your Own, gives the reader an idea of what he wants to accomplish with his book. LeFavour creates a French delicacy that mixes practical hiking information about packs and boots, folds in helpful knowledge of maps, hotels and restaurants, then sprinkles on clever anecdotes of people and places in the spectacularly different regions of France.

There are many books available that guide the traveler by car, train, bicycle and even barges, but few explore France by foot with such authority. The reader learns the differences between les hotels (hotels), chambres d'hotes (bed-and-breakfasts) and gites e'tape (simple rural inns for hikers and sportifs). For experienced travelers and especially those who have frequented France, this book provides a wonderful new alternative but be warned. By its very nature the pace is deliberate. The traveler carries very little (LeFavour recommends a small pack weighing less than 20 pounds) but returns with a chestful of memorable experiences that will last a lifetime.

Alas, most travelers to France are happy and maybe even prefer to hurriedly see key historical sites, museums, castles and glimpse as much of the countryside as possible in a few days then rush off to the next country. For those travelers, I would recommend other books. Travelers seeking a quaint place for a meal, a good bottle of wine and who can afford to be on no particular schedule will definitely appreciate this high quality book.

JEFFREY MOORE (January / February 1999)

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