



My Love Affair with England: A Traveler's Memoir

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Journalist and memoirist Susan Allen Toth brings her special England vividly to life as she recalls her many trips there over the years, where she explored the countryside, traveled both second-class and in luxury, theatre-hopped, hunted for ghosts, and honeymooned. Humorous, bittersweet, and wonderfully eccentric, this is a delightful remembrance to be savored by those who love to travel or just dream of it.

"I love MY LOVE AFFAIR WITH ENGLAND. It is written clearly and with a understanding that far supasses any feeling of condescension or superiority or general quaintness among the natives, all of which I detect in books about other countries."

M.F.K. Fisher

My Love Affair with England: A Traveler's Memoir Details

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From Reader Review My Love Affair with England: A Traveler's Memoir for online ebook

Andy Plonka says

A little dated (1992) memoir of the author's travels in the English countryside and London> I'm not sure it could be reproduced today. 1960 , when the first essays were written until 1992 when the book was published were much gentler times than today.

Sarah Coller says

Journal entry regarding this book from nine years ago: " I enjoyed this book so much that I'm going to get a copy for my permanent collection. For some reason, I seem to have developed somewhat of an annoyance/dislike/aversion to England in the last few years but this book has really changed my mind. I want to have a copy for myself to use as a guide and plan a trip of my own someday.

Since the book was written 18 years ago, I am interested in finding out what Ms. Toth and her husband are up to now. I think it's wonderful that she found such a loving life partner and travelling buddy in her second husband, James."

Today's journal entry:

It's funny how one's mind can change about a book over time. The first time I read this, I was completely enraptured and immediately in love with England. This time through though, I found the book to be pretty depressing overall. Maybe it's because I've had my own happy experiences in England now to compare it to, but I just found it pretty negative this time around.

The essays included span at least 30 years--- she's gone as a single young woman, a single woman in her 30s, a teacher, a mother, a married woman to a man who wasn't that into it...and a married woman with a husband who was a kindred spirit. Those are the ones I enjoyed the most---the ones featuring her, now deceased, husband and best friend. The ones featuring her spoiled brat daughter, Jenny, were my least favorite. Nothing at all endeared me to that whiny whiner.

Much of the book's references were outdated (Reagan, Diana) but I did relate to the desire to pretend like I live there when I visit. It's much more fun to see England as a wannabe resident than as a tourist---cheaper too.

I didn't enjoy many parts---a lot of going on about her personal life that I couldn't relate to---and the sheep dog trials went ON and on...not a fan.

I did enjoy the chapter on walking sticks.

So, overall, I think there have been much better travels journals written---my own included. However, since this one did play a part in my own love affair with England, I suppose it's not all bad.

Trisha says

Toth certainly has a way with words when describing her love for England and its charm and wonder. I found the sweetest chapter to be the one about her travels with her husband and the most toilsome to be the ones that include too much personal information (did we really need to know those details?) and a descent into whining or political correctness.

Trelawn says

I really loved this book. It was so relaxing reading about Toth's trips to various stately homes and churches, manicured gardens and untamed walkways. I think my main reason for enjoying this book is that Paul and I are planning to go back to London for our honeymoon next year. It's "our" place. Reading this book you realise that a large proportion of the joy Toth derives from her trips to England comes from the fact that she shares the experience with her husband, James. While her friends seem somewhat bemused with her love of England, James drives her down country lanes and windy roads to get to places she wants to visit because they have quirky names. They experience England together, not doing just the touristy things but embarking on the sort of trips that they enjoy but others would dread. It was a very enjoyable read and I will definitely read more by Toth. It also helped alleviate my longing for another Helene Hanff book

Liz says

I bought this little book at our library used book sale for \$1.50 and have enjoyed it immensely. We just recently took our first trip to England and I was delighted to read about their adventures driving on narrow country roads as we had done! Really loved her insights and humor too. Wish I could visit this beautiful country as many times as she has, but maybe will get another trip in someday.

Deb (Readerbuzz) Nance says

Author Susan Allen Toth has visited England many, many times, and she has fallen in love with this country. Like any good love affair, however, there are good times and bad, times when the two are in sync and times when they are not on speaking terms, times when both are enraptured with each other and times when they are just about to break up. Toth goes to England for a variety of reasons: hiking trips, one (unsuccessful) honeymoon, ghost watching, hiking, a pilgrimage, college courses for students, and bird watching. Somehow, Toth knew not to risk her affair with England by permanently settling down; it was enough to visit frequently and unexpectedly.

Jaclyn says

I picked up *My Love Affair with England* again recently, for what must be the umpteenth time, in preparation

for my upcoming vacation. I first read this cheery travel memoir when I was in high school and had no chance whatsoever of going to England because my parents didn't have any desire to go. I've since read it many more times. I've become familiar with the stories that Susan Allen Toth tells about her favorite country, so that they almost feel like bedtime stories.

Travel memoirs walk a tricky line. On the one hand, they can be overly saccharine and romantic, imbuing the places and the locals with too much quaintness. Not only can that be hard to swallow, but it's also rather patronizing. On the other hand, I've read travel memoirs that gleefully zero in on the "seedy" parts of the subject country - and "seedy" parts do exist in every country, even a country as cozy as England - and take too much delight in describing teeming underworlds of malcontents, oily gas stations and fluorescent lights. That's not why I travel, and that's not why I read travel writing.

Susan Allen Toth walks the line perfectly. She doesn't shy away from discussing the less savory parts of her trips - her daughter's Dickensian foreign exchange experience, for instance, or the freezing hotel that almost gave one of her students a recurrence of kidney disease. But while those parts are sprinkled in for a bit of realism here and there, they are by no means the main focus of the book. Susan Allen Toth clearly loves England - everything about it. She loves the great country houses, sprawling gardens, inviting tearooms, mysterious family ghost legends, wooded or breezy cliffside walks, and fun local customs like badger watching or sheepdog competitions. She throws herself into her English travel experiences with enthusiasm and open-mindedness and seems especially adept at locating the quaint and bizarre just off the beaten path. Read this book and you too will embark on your own love affair with England. If you can't swing the plane ticket right now, trust me, *My Love Affair with England* will tide you over until you can.

Joy Weese Moll says

My Love Affair with England is a loosely-joined, non-chronological, series of essays covering about thirty years of travel in England from 1960 to the early 1990s. The topics range from food and sheep dog trials to the theater and the royal family. As one could guess from the title, this is a romantic look at the country of Shakespeare's theater, Wordsworth's daffodils, and Austen's Lyme Regis.

This is at least the third time I've read *My Love Affair with England*, even though I'm not usually a re-reader. I pick it up every time I think I might finally enact my dream of visiting England. The current version of that dream has it penciled on the calendar for September.

More about this book and my travel dreams on my blog: [My Love Affair with England](#)

Jessica says

I haven't had so much fun since I went to England! Although I'm afraid no one else will really care much about this book unless they have spent time there.

I felt like Susan Allen Toth perfectly explained why someone can fall so in love with England and just itch to get back there again. I loved her descriptions of the gardens, the people, the funny quirks of the British, the manor houses . . . and although I will probably never be able to spend as much time there as she has, it reminded me of why England is in my blood and why I love to think about my England adventures whenever

I am feeling down. *sigh*

Karith Amel says

I'm not sure how to accurately voice my feelings about this book. It was a fun read, given to me by my mother in preparation for my upcoming year in England. She thought I'd resonate with the author, who loves England for its literature and history. And I did. There were places where she came close to capturing what it is that so intoxicates me about the country of kings and poets, architects and scholars. But she also misses the mark, I think.

She is someone who likes to dabble in England, imagine herself touched by its history, enjoy a walk in a picturesque park. And that she conveys. But has she really been changed by England? Found the essence of her being wrapped up in the landscape, lost and found herself there? She gives hints of such moments -- small seconds of discovery -- but the structure of Toth's book does not easily lend itself to such vulnerability. Jumping crazily from topic to topic, with no clear thematic structure, or overarching vision, it's hard to see where the book is going, or to trust that it's really going anywhere. Is the narrator, who we've known for over 200 pages, any different at the end than she was at the beginning? Has she undergone transformation, as all heroines, even in memoirs, should? It's unclear. The answer is probably yes. Certainly she is not the college student who first experienced England one summer in the '60s, but the chaotic structure of her book has not really allowed us to see that change. To undergo it with her. Or to truly understand how England has been instrumental in it. Instead, we're given paragraph after paragraph of description. The names of great houses. Types of flowers. Species of trees. Sights on the coast. And it isn't that I mind so much. It's just that, without her personal connection to those places, those flowers, those trees, we might as well be reading a tour book.

England is a powerful topic for any writer, especially one who loves it as much, and knows it as well, as Toth seems to. However, no writer should forget that memoirs are ultimately about discovery of the self, and while Toth flirts with the issue, she ultimately leaves the real subject matter obscure.

Amy says

I give this title about a 2.5 stars. I was disappointed because I had high hopes for it! The author was going through some hard things in her life and I think that came through too much...it was sort of a depressing memoir. And yet, there were moments where she would explain beautiful scenery and experiences while visiting England that I really loved. I enjoyed her chapter on eating desserts especially! ;) I will be giving her other England memoirs a try though...

Carmen says

3.5 stars I'm reading two more of her books about England now. She provides so many useful insider's tips, particularly on gardens that shouldn't be missed (apparently there are thousands of those). I've found that she and I have completely opposite theories on the best way to pack for Europe, but I've decided not to dwell on that.

Alisha says

With chapters on sheep dog trials, an unexpected foray into the high life at the Savoy, the royal family, badger-watching, incredible and peace-inspiring gardens, the delights of the a good walking-stick, and the joys of walking where the paths lead you, this book was mostly right up my alley.

This book by Susan Allen Toth, and another book I've recently read (A Fine Romance: Falling in Love with the English Countryside by Susan Branch) have done an amazing job at letting me live vicariously and travel the parts of England I would love to see someday. These two authors hit the nail on the head when it comes to describing why I feel drawn to England and what I would look for during a sojourn there.

This book acknowledges periodically that, just as with all places, England has changed over the years. It may not be as safe as it used to be. It isn't a fairy tale. But the attractions described in this book can still be found, and would still seem to fill the traveler with the greatest of satisfaction.

Kathryn says

Charming! Truly little vignettes of love for and about England, with some traveler's tips tossed in for good measure. Toth loves gardens and spends a great deal of time discussing them, and her section on Whinnie the Pooh's England was absolutely adorable! This added greatly to my joy and anticipation as I planned my trip to the UK!

Manik Sukoco says

I enjoyed every scene in the book.

Actually the format of the book is a bit disjointed and jumps unexpectedly from one visit to another, not necessarily in chronological order. Also she digresses at times to give us a glimpse of her marriages and brief affairs. But instead of distracting from her narrative, these elements add interest, in my opinion. After all, she is describing a love affair, not offering a travel guide.

This certainly is not your usual travelogue featuring the most popular attractions of the nation. Susan Allen Toth usually gets off the beaten path to find the real England, discovering many places and facts that the average traveler would not have the ingenuity nor the energy nor the nerve to uncover.

I found the trip thoroughly delightful and am looking forward to reading another of her books about this quirky but fascinating country.
