



## Things Can Only Get Feta: Two Journalists and Their Crazy Dog Living Through the Greek Crisis

*Marjory McGinn*

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After an Arctic winter, a British recession, and a downturn in the newspaper industry, two journalists and their dog embark on an adventure in the wild and beautiful southern Peloponnese. A perfect plan, except for one thing - Greece is deep in economic crisis. And if fiscal failure can't overturn the couple's escapade in rural Greece, perhaps macabre local customs, a scorpion invasion, zero dog-tolerance, health scares, and touchy expats will. This is a humorous and insightful journey through one of the last unspoilt regions of Greece. It is full of encounters with warm-hearted, often eccentric, Greeks who show that this troubled country still has heroes, if not euros. In a hillside village in the Mani, the locals share their lives, their laughter and their stories and help chart the couple's own passage back to happiness. They even find a place in their hearts for their Greek nemesis - the local pungent goat cheese. Things really can only get feta!

## Things Can Only Get Feta: Two Journalists and Their Crazy Dog Living Through the Greek Crisis Details

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# From Reader Review Things Can Only Get Feta: Two Journalists and Their Crazy Dog Living Through the Greek Crisis for online ebook

## Effrosyni Moschoudi says

A delightful, quaint portrayal of rural life in Greece!

I absolutely loved this book! It's a delightful, humorous account of life in rural Greece, as it's perceived through the eyes of two Scots who decide to spend a year in a Peloponesian village. I got to love all the quaint characters described in this book. My personal favourite was Foteini who's been portrayed with such tremendous sensitivity that it was impossible not to love her like a family member by the end of the book.

What can I say about Wallace, the dog? The author recounts so many hilarious antics that it seems that a great part of the merit in this book is owed to this adorable pet alone. I laughed outloud to read about his infamous bathroom trick and also his obsession with eating chicken. I don't think I'll ever see a backpack again without thinking of chicken sandwiches!

Marjory McGinn has written a book that brims over with love for Greece and the Greek language. It is evident in so many ways, like the way she sides with the locals when the British expats attempt to trash them, the way she allows for the quirkiness of the Greeks, the respect with which she regards unfathomable local customs and acts, and last but not least, in the way she keeps quoting the equivalent Greek word, so often, quite needlessly. But she obviously does this not in an attempt to show off her rich Greek vocabulary. It is crystal clear that she does it only with love, extending to the reader an invitation to share in her affinity for the language itself. This particular point made me choke with appreciation. I found it so incredibly sweet. Also, I found all the examples of her mistakes in Greek terribly hilarious. It made me think how many Greek words can sound almost the same to the untrained, foreign ear. I cringed to think how embarrassing it must have been for her to be teased so much by the locals!

I've read numerous books by British authors who've recorded their experiences with fixing up the odd dilapidated house in various parts of Greece. All the accounts managed to irritate me, both with their arrogance and intolerance towards the Greek way of life, as well as with the many inaccuracies their stories included. Thankfully, this book was a breath of fresh air. It caused in me zero offence and zero annoyance. Being the competent, talented journalist that she is, Marjory McGinn sticks to the facts and gives objectively a delightful account of the locals and their antics without passing judgment or even implying that they are less civilized or knowledgable than herself.

But it wasn't just life in the village that was a pleasure to read about. There were also numerous historical references that I found utterly interesting. Whichever part of Greece the author mentions traveling to with her husband and adorable pet, she offers a thorough account of the local history, myths or legends. Unlike all the other books of the sort that I've read, again, this book stands out for this fact too, showing that the author had to research heavily for the book. Her trouble to do that betrays her love for my country and its history, which again I found myself appreciating immensely.

All in all, this is the best book of its kind that I've ever read. It had it all: humour, wit, interesting facts, and a good measure of sentiment. Marjory McGinn is a truly talented author and I'm really looking forward to a sequel!

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## **Caryl Williams says**

This book by Marjorie, the first in an enchanting three book series, is funny, informative and interesting. A really enjoyable memoir about a couple's stay in a remote village in the Marni Pelappone region of Greece.

Marjory and her husband Jim, both journalists whose jobs in Scotland were affected by the newspaper industry upheaval in the UK, arrive in Greece planning to spend maybe an adventurous year or so in the country documenting their adventures. They bring with them their lovable but mad Jack Russell Wallace, who ends up having quite a few hair-raising adventures of his own in a country where dogs are not generally kept as pets and are barely tolerated except largely in a functioning role of guarding their owners' properties. Wallace somehow becomes accepted or by the villagers who give him a new name of 'Vassy'.

Marjory and Jim, or rather Margarita and Dimitrios as they are renamed by the locals, immerse themselves in village life, make friends and in time become accepted members of the community. Life is hard for the villagers and more so in the Greek crisis. The background to the crisis is explained in an informative way and I learned much more about the history and circumstances behind it. Having spent time in Greece on holiday and more recently in Athens, I was aware of the crisis but not as fully informed as I'd like to be, but a lot more of what we witnessed makes much more sense after reading this book.

Marjorie makes friends with an indomitable lady called Foteini who features in many anecdotes and adventures. Foteini looks after her olive trees and keeps a few goats and a donkey in a hillside dwelling, she also has a village house in a state of some disrepair that's hardly used. Their friendship is real and deep and we learn much about the history and hardships of Greek hill farmers and villagers.

A must read for anyone interested in learning about the real Greece.

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## **Kelly W says**

Things Can Only Get Feta was a very enjoyable read. McGinn has a quick sense of humor that made me laugh out loud at some of the scrapes she got into, particularly with her attempts at speaking Greek. (I can relate, having lived in Sweden for over a year long ago. I regularly mangled that beautiful language.)

The author is respectful of the many interesting people who lived in her village. She describes them so well, the reader comes away feeling as though you have met them, too. They live a rural life that most Americans cannot imagine. Her stories about them are fascinating. She doesn't spare her sense of humor on herself. She and her husband have lived in various places worldwide, dragging with them a wacko Jack Russell terrier named Wallace, after William Wallace, of Scottish "Braveheart" fame. I think even Braveheart would have shied away from this psycho canine.

McGinn alludes to deciding to stay a second year in Greece, albeit in a different village. I certainly hope she writes a sequel to this book. I'd buy it in a heartbeat.

I received this book for free from Goodreads. That did not influence my review.

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### **Trish says**

Delightful. Gerald Durrell meets Bill Bryson

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### **Tracy says**

I loved this book. Having been to Greece the last two summers and planning another trip this summer the title just caught my eye. I was not disappointed. Its full of quirky "real Greek " moments and covers a year in the lives of two British journalists who move to rural Greece with a (very crazy) Jack Russell dog. You get a real feel for the rural Greek way of life which with the economic crisis is becoming tougher. There are funny, moving and sad moments and the book opens up traditional Greece which I've yet to discover.

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### **Kathryn Gauci says**

One of the best travel memoirs about Greece that I've read in a long time. Marjory McGinn's time spent in a village in the Mani in the Peloponnese, is a heartwarming account of village life and all it entails. Unlike many foreigners who spend time in Greece and merely write a superficial account of Greek life, Marjory and her partner make a concerted effort to get to know the locals and in turn, the villagers opened their hearts to welcome them into the fold. Added to the mix is their wonderfully, crazy dog, Wallace, who became a much-loved character in the story. The author has a great knack for telling Greek life as it is - the ups and the downs, yet at no time is she disparaging towards the Greek people. She is a natural story teller and her honesty and love for Greece and its people is evident. I believe she has left her mark on this village just as much as they left it on her. A fabulous read which I recommend to all lovers of Greece.

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### **Judy says**

I really enjoyed this memoir of a couple of journalists from Scotland who chose to move to a village in Greece right as the economic crisis hit there (and elsewhere). I'm always a sucker for expat stories (for obvious reasons), and I liked the fact that this couple chose a small village rather than a big city, and did their best to incorporate themselves into the community (along with their crazy Jack Russell terrier). They describe the members of the community sympathetically, but not sentimentally, and made you want to go there to experience the life there yourself. At the end they are contemplating another year in another village, so it's obvious that there are more adventures to come.

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### **Eleanore MacDonald says**

This book was such fun to read, and really gives one a clear view of life in a small, rural Greek village. I

spend a lot of time in Greece, so though I've never met them, the characters that Marjory McGinn brought so elegantly to three dimensional life, so archetypal, are near and dear to me! I appreciated the way that as she and her husband made the brave and wild decision to live abroad in Greece for a year, unlike so many expats they found their way into the soul of a village and found themselves in turn embraced by its heart - and moved through their fantasy, a vivid skepticism and on into true love of a culture and its people. Well written, funny, entertaining and touching, I loved this book. And oh, the crazy dog ... Wallace is a wild delight! Anyone who has known a Jack Russell Terrier will be in stitches following all that Wallace brings to the 'party' as only a JRT can! A great read for travelers, philhellenes and dog lovers alike.

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### **Daphne Kapsali says**

There are many accounts of "expat life" in places like Spain and France; much fewer set in rural Greece, and fewer still as well-written, interesting and funny as *Things Can Only Get Feta*. As a Greek, I often struggle with such memoirs, as I find they tend to be either over-familiar with or too dismissive of the people and the lifestyle of the places they describe. Marjory and Jim, however, are happily somewhere in the middle, fully aware that they can only just scratch the surface of life in their chosen village in the Mani, but trying, nonetheless, to be part of it as fully and as genuinely as they can during their stay. They build real relationships with the locals and avoid the expat cliques, and the result is a very honest and often hilarious glimpse into how "foreigners" are received in a small village community, with bits of local history thrown in, and mercifully free of the usual exaggerations and stereotypes that surround "the quaint Greeks". I enjoyed this book a lot, and I've already started on the next one in the series. Also, Wallace the dog is fantastic!

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### **Stella Pierides says**

A tale full of adventure, warmth, and wit.

Two journalists and their dog spending a year in the rural and wild southern Peloponnese at the beginning of the Greek economic crisis: A tale full of adventure, warmth, and wit, delving into the heart of the communities in this area.

Helped along by some knowledge of the language, Marjory McGinn makes her home in the village of Megali Mantinea, in Mani "...because it promised soaring temperatures and deserted coves... most of all it was described as untamed and remote, all the better to find colourful characters, raw edges, and even the odd calamity." It turns out that - against the dark backdrop of Greece's ever-deepening economic crisis - Mani's people, their life and customs, and the expat community, offer Marjory all of the above and more.

Things are not going entirely according to plan, so Marjorie and her partner, Jim, have to deal with a number of surprising matters: scorpions, dustbins, veterinary lab tests, a fishhook, dentists or the lack of them... And they do so with humor and moods that match the fiercely independent and proud community of local Greeks who, in turn, have to deal not only with the demands of a harsh landscape, unforgiving history, and hundreds of years of rebellion against invading foes, but also with increasing austerity measures and a deteriorating economy.

There are plenty of sympathetic and unforgettable descriptions of local characters, interesting background on the area, hilarious escapades as well as moving moments, and insightful observations of the local expats who

turn out to be as colourful as the locals. Cultural tensions between Greeks and expats add to the frisson and make this book an interesting read and as independent-minded as those it describes. At a deeper level, the incidents illustrate the author's quest for rootedness: a sort of *Odyssey*, with the author stopping to learn from and experience different places and characters.

A treat to curl up with by the fire on a cold winter evening, or by the Aegean, on a warm summer's day. Even more, enticing to visit the places it describes. I haven't been to the area, but having read this book I most definitely will visit.

After Marjory McGinn left Greece to return to Scotland - she'd planned to be there for a year, but stayed three in the end - the Greek economy continued on its downward slide. I wonder how the people in the villages she describes are faring now. At the same time, I know that many from the cities - over three million alone live in Athens - facing unemployment and homelessness, are now moving back to rural Greece, from where their parents came from and where families may still own land. I wonder how this influx - of educated, artistic, cosmopolitan as well as depressed Greeks is going to affect the villages featured in this book. In this case, this book, might become a future reference source about life in 'unspoilt' Greece.

A sequel is implied. I hope it materializes; I certainly look forward to it!

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### **Linda Fagioli-Katsiotas says**

This book is very enjoyable, especially if you've spent time in Greece and if you understand the quirky nature of Jack Russell Terriers. The author, Marjory McGinn, writes about time spent living in a village in Peloponnese on the southern mainland. There are so many comical moments as she interacts with the locals. That Greek spirit which is so endearing when one is on vacation just hanging around and enjoying the anesthetic atmosphere of Greece, quickly becomes laughingly exasperating when the author has to deal with such problems as thoughtlessly placed village garbage-dumpsters (Rubbish bins), or the snail-like progress of roadwork or the ordeal of re-registering one's car. The car issue is especially comical as the author seems to have very few models among the Greek citizens from which she can take an example of the correct way to legally register a car and as she embarks on that adventure, she concludes that it is a process "only a masochist with deep pockets would want to pursue." She pulls the readers further into these contradictory feelings that waft between her euphoric love of Greece and her steaming frustration as we're taken from one adventure to another. Each new circumstance might be so mundane in another setting but when dealing with it the Greek-way, it most certainly means a few chuckles for the reader. The overall theme is reiterated throughout the story with one variation or another of: "this is Greece, what do you expect?"

In addition to the story, the author also has some very enjoyable lines of imagery such as: ". . . the elderly members looking demure and well pressed, like old roses kept for eternity in a heavy book." Nice, right? Or as she voices her loud objection to being badgered to reveal the amount of rent she pays, "I said [it] in a loud shrill voice, like a buttoned-up librarian being groped unexpectedly in the back of the reference section." I really enjoyed this book and I recommend it whole-heartedly, though I might be a bit Greek-biased.

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### **John says**

One of the better stories of expat life - especially recommended for readers looking for tales of life in Greece, or those with a strong interest in dogs.

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### **thereadytraveller says**

A very pleasant book (of three in the "series") about two Scottish journalists and their dog Jack Russell, Wallace, who leave Scotland to spend a year in the South Peloponnese.

Centred in and around the tiny village of Megali Mantinea, the writing comes across as authentic in describing their adventures and experiences with the Greek villagers and other ex-pats who have relocated to this slice of paradise.

Imparting a good amount of history of the region this is an engaging story that entertains without ever coming across as being cheesy (unlike this short review).

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### **Harry Bucknall says**

"Things Can Only Get Feta" is a delight - Marjory McGinn succinctly captures the essence of life among the Greeks; rarely a dull moment, especially with Wallace the dog in tow. Jack Russells always adding a certain frisson of surprise and dread at the prospect of the next unexpected turn of events which, of course, is why we love them so much ... most of the time.

Marjory, with her warm, engaging style, laconic wit and eye for detail brings the herb infused landscape of the Mani to life with a joyous ease, while accurately portraying the exacting woes the Greeks have suffered since the world turned sour after 2008. Let us hope that, come the sequel - which surely there must be, the wheel of fortune will have turned once again.

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### **Pamela says**

I have loved all 3 of her books about living in Greece together with her partner and daft dog Wallace. I hope she writes some more.

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