



Legion of the Lost: The True Experience of An American in the French Foreign Legion

Jaime Salazar

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Revised edition, with a new foreword and afterword from the author.

'From an air-conditioned Chicago office, Mr. Salazar took the express elevator straight to hell. Legion of the Lost is his story, the improbable, very funny tale of a sensitive, bookish child of Mexican immigrants who walked away from a promising career and, for romantic reasons, threw in his lot with a motley assortment of thugs, drunks, drug abusers and desperate refugees from the far corners of the earth. And those are the ones giving orders.'

New York Times

'A story of horrifying institutionalised cruelty and incredible suffering, tempered with extraordinary camaraderie and mind-boggling fortitude. Legion of the Lost lays to rest romantic myths about the French Foreign Legion forever.'

Google Books

'After about a year in corporate America, Jaime Salazar realized he wanted more in life. He wanted more than a big paycheck and a BMW. Salazar is a born adventurer and romantic and was not content with his job with Siemens in Chicago, where he was part of the technical sales teams. His ideals led him to the French Foreign Legion.'

The Purdue Exponent

'A colorful, detailed, and brisk account of the blood, beatings, binge drinking, racism, and occasional satisfaction and pride from his time with the Legion. Salazar's prose marches along like a fit Legionnaire, largely un-ornamented yet getting the job done quickly and effectively, with all the dirt, swearing, and gunpowder one would expect from a military memoir. Legion of the Lost should prompt serious reflection about commitment, discipline, meaning, and purpose in life.'

Good Reads

No army is more surrounded by mystery, romance, and admiration than the French Foreign Legion. King Louis Philippe II created the Foreign Legion in 1831 as a way to rid France of penniless immigrants and others considered a liability to the French establishment. The Foreign Legion still exists today as an elite army of modern mercenaries from around the world, in the service of la France.

Considered a haven for the dregs of society, joining the Foreign Legion was rumoured to be simple, but it wasn't. Getting out of the Foreign Legion, as Salazar soon realised, proved impossible. So what was an engineering professional doing in the "Legion of the Damned"? For those Dostoevsky calls the "insulted and the injured," men of character who seek adventure in the most obscure places, the Legion offers refuge. After surrendering his passport, and with it, any human rights, the Legion gave Salazar a new name and life.

Even after finishing four months of what the Legion calls instruction, Salazar realized that his existence wasn't like that of Gary Cooper in Beau Geste. It was more a primitive life of beatings, marches, fanatical discipline, and sadistic NCOs. Idealists looking for a new beginning come to the Legion, but only the toughest, and cruelest are left to wear the Legion headdress, the kepi blanc.

Once enlisted, there are three ways to leave the Legion: finishing one's five-year contract, disability, or leaving in a box. While serving a term in Legion prison, Salazar came up with a fourth solution - escape."

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Details

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Author : Jaime Salazar

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From Reader Review Legion of the Lost: The True Experience of An American in the French Foreign Legion for online ebook

Abram says

This book looked like it had promise but it turned out really bad. I was very let down.

Fred says

4/5 Stars, worth reading but nothing I would run out and buy. It's a good story, I mean, how many Americans actually rush out and join the French Foreign Legion? And then desert and run away to stay in Europe for a girl that turns out not to want anything serious or some such. Sorry I can't give a more detailed review, I read it about three years ago.

Jonas Van Riel says

I'd give it 3.5 stars (7/10). It's nothing special, but it's an easy read and perfect if you're not in the mood for complex storylines or plot twists. And somehow quite interesting to learn about life in the foreign legion.

KarnagesMistress says

I received this book for free through Goodreads Giveaways. It is autographed.

Nate says

Four pages in, Salazar explains the impetus for his adventure in a devastating critique of mindless toil and consumerism: "I realized that if I dedicated my entire lifetime to the company I might eventually end up with a six-figure salary and the title of vice president of some obscure division. I'd become a small tile in the corporate mosaic and then I'd die. My descendants would gobble up their inherited trust fund, and a few years after that, I'd be forgotten."

There are questions that have occurred to young men of all generations: what should I be doing with my life? Could I handle a true test of manhood? Purdue engineering grad Jaime Salazar ditches his fast-track job in corporate America, emigrates to France, and joins the Foreign Legion in an attempt to grapple with these questions, but ends up getting much more satisfying answers to the second question than the first. Along the way, however, he provides a colorful, detailed, and brisk account of the blood, beatings, binge drinking, racism, and occasional satisfaction and pride from his time with the Legion.

Salazar's prose marches along like a fit Legionnaire, largely un-ornamented yet getting the job done quickly and effectively, with all the dirt, swearing, and gunpowder one would expect from a military memoir.

Periodically, however, Salazar pauses for serious introspection, and the quotations heading each chapter (from other pieces) touch on the masochistic to mystical relationship soldiers have had with the Legion. Since it is a memoir, the book does not end with a neat moment of enlightenment, only more questions. But even for those that would never consider military service, *Legion of the Lost* should prompt serious reflection about commitment, discipline, meaning, and purpose in life.

John says

I started the book thinking it would be something similar to 'The Damned Die Hard' - but it was not. A story of an American who joined the Fresh Foreign Legion and then deserted. Not recommended.

Jen says

It's a little hard to appreciate the author's writing style. Towards the middle of the book the author gets into a repeating loop of similar events that don't really seem to go anywhere until the last few pages. The book does provide an interesting glimpse into the Foreign Legion, though skewed by the author's own egotism. As the last reviewer said it might be better to find a book written by someone that had garnered more experience before writing a book.

Joseph says

Legion of the Lost: The True Experience of an American in the French Foreign Legion by Jamie Salazar is the story of one American's experience in the French Foreign Legion. Salazar is a graduate of Purdue University and employed by Siemens before joining the Legion. He has earned his law degree and currently works in Houston, Texas in the energy sector.

We all at one time or another have an urge to run off and do something "extreme." After high school, I joined the Marines, but that was more youthful patriotism than escaping. The French Foreign Legion was something that I read about and occasionally saw portrayed in movies. The idea of serving in France had no appeal to me.

The Legion was formed in 1831 specifically for foreigners to fight for France. Typically it attracted people on the run or people looking for some place to hide. It did, too, attract some idealists but they were the minority. In Salazar's time, the legion still attracted the same crowds. Salazar seems to be different in his reasons for joining. He wanted something different than engineering sales and life behind a desk. He joined for what he didn't want more than for what he wanted.

Salazar describes the brutality in the daily life of a Legionnaire. From "boot camp" through being a junior legionnaire violence from noncommissioned officers (NCOs) was a part of daily life. It wasn't just the NCOs. Various "mafias" existed English speakers, Russians, Eastern Europeans who didn't seem to mind violence on their counterparts. Unlike the Marines where every race is green, the Legion doesn't seem to support racial harmony. The violence is far more than I would have expected. I assume that a combat ready group of "thugs" would be looking to vent in a peace time environment. Violence, drinking, and drugs became the norm.

Salazar presents a mix of honor, esprit de corps, and servitude that seems to part of another century. The mystique of the French Foreign Legion is ripped away and replaced with small patches pride and accomplishment in a sea of misery. In many ways, the Legion seemed like a prison with sadistic guards and rival "gangs." Although loyalty is to the Legion it does not seem to be enough to form group cohesion and effectiveness. Other services rely on nationalism and patriotism to create unity and avoid possible personal (racial and ethnic) conflicts. Salazar's story is as interesting as it is unexpected.

Nicholas Wagner says

If you enjoy stories about survival, high adventure, and underdog's, then I suggest that you should read this book. This book was a good story to read due to the constant suspense of whether or not Jaime was going to survive, give up hope, or desert the Foreign Legion. This story is somewhat reminds me of an underdog story, due to the fact that even though Jaime is constantly put down by his superiors, he stills tries and quite often succeeds in getting the better of his superiors, by proving what he is made of. Overall this story was excellent because it lets you know even though troubles may come, you will still be able to overcome them if you persevere. This book was a little slow and repetitive at times but it was still enjoyable.

Jennifer Lednick says

Trash. The target audience of this is immature soldiers in their 20s vice me, a 49 year old woman, even though I have 27 yrs of military service. Violent, stupid decisions, drinking and sex is the content. The book was free — picked it up on a base when about to head home from deployment — I read it to get it out of my house, and I'm surprised I finished it.

Jim says

Somewhat disappointing read. I was hoping for more action, but it focuses almost entirely on his decision to join and then the training. I think he could have used a stronger editor.

Maxo Marc says

A great story and filled with great insight into this mysterious fighting force.

Checkman says

It's taken me a while to review this.....book. Here's why.

A young man, Purdue graduate, destined to climb the ladder of corporate America. That's Jaime Salazar. Good looking, one assumes charming (if his biography is to be believed) and popular with the ladies. Ahh but the poor boy wants *more* out of life. At least for a few months. You know - a sabbatical. Maybe get some

great research material, write a book, then move into corporate America. Like a young prince who is allowed to sow his wild oats before finally assuming the mantle (cloak?Oh who cares) of his destiny.

Hey here's an idea. Join the *French Foreign Legion*. Get some material,enjoy some sexual conquests, then go AWOL and go back to Texas. Write a book. Go into the gas and oil business. Makes lots of money. Brag about your Legion days to all your corporate buddies on Sundays ,at the boss's house, while drinking imported beer and smoking expensive cigars. Cool.

So is it obvious that I didn't like the book or the author? At least

Edward Conlon author of *Blue Blood* actually completed his New York City Police training and then went on to have a sixteen career career (1995-2011) as a police officer. Salazar went for a few months as a Legionnaire and then quit.

I have no respect for Salazar and I despise both him and this dreck that he wrote. Don't waste your time reading it.

Spencer says

This was a very interesting novel describing the adventures of Salazar and his experiences in the Foreign Legion. It is a gripping tale and hard to put down.

Cheyenne Smith says

A very interesting book giving an inside perspective to running off and joining the French Foreign legion. Though not an action packed tale of war it is a no less compelling telling of rough training the legionnaire's go through. As well as the type of people such a life attracts.
