



Chickens, Mules and Two Old Fools: Tuck into a Slice of Andalucian Life

Victoria Twead

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Perhaps if Joe and Vicky had known what relocating to a tiny village, tucked in the Alpujarra mountains, would really be like, they might have hesitated... They have no idea of the culture shock in store. No idea they will become reluctant chicken farmers and own the most dangerous cockerel in Spain. No idea they will be befriended by an 85 year old spliff-smoking sex-kitten or rescued by a mule. Life is never dull as they embark on their Five Year Plan. At the end of five years they must decide. Will they stay, or return to the relative sanity of England? Vicky and Joe's story is packed with irreverent humour, animals, eccentric characters and sunshine. 'Chickens, Mules and Two Old Fools' was awarded the HarperCollins Authonomy 'Gold Star' in November 2008. 'laugh-out-loud funny...especially the Spanish women heckling over eggs from the The English...hilarious...engaging...the interspersion of recipes is charming' HarperCollins 'This is wonderful. I have tears in my eyes...the humour, the warmth, the joy...I love this book...the two of you sitting on the sofa in that dusty street listening to Spanish tunes on the crackly radio. What a sight you must have been...' Aleck Loker, author of 18 books including 'Ancient Explorers of America'. 'I love the relaxed writing style and easy humour of this. Great stuff!' Denny Gillan, author of 'Will You Love Me Tomorrow'. 'Victoria Tread is a natural storyteller with a knack for charm and wit.' Robin Bayley, author of 'The Mango Orchard'.

Chickens, Mules and Two Old Fools: Tuck into a Slice of Andalucian Life Details

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From Reader Review Chickens, Mules and Two Old Fools: Tuck into a Slice of Andalucian Life for online ebook

Paul E. Morph says

Part memoir, part recipe book, this was an easy read; perfect for on the beach or beside the pool. It was, perhaps, a little twee in places for my tastes but I wouldn't say I didn't enjoy it. I'm sure I'll be reading the rest of the series.

Erma Odrach says

If you're looking to experience sunny Spain, and maybe even life in a tiny village tucked in the Alpujarra Mountains, and without leaving home, then *Chickens, Mules and Two Old Fools* is for you.

Approaching retirement, Vicky and her husband, Joe, one day decide to pack up their bags and leave their comfortable Sussex, England home and settle in the village El Hoya, Spain. It is not long before they come to learn village life is full of surprises and mishaps, with hilarious culture clashes at every turn. When Vicky and Joe unintentionally find themselves chicken farmers, Vicky says, *"Oh, please! Our Spanish neighbours already thought we were insane, sitting on the yellow sofa gazing at our flock, letting them hop onto our laps, talking to them."*

Whether saved by a mule or sitting at a party table in the middle of the road celebrating a neighbour's birthday (and blocking traffic), *Chickens* ... not only paints a warm, funny and colourful picture of rural Spain, but also tells of how two zany Brits came to fit right in. Light-hearted and full of sunshine. A thoroughly enjoyable read.

Maria Mcmahon says

This is a wonderful book! I enjoyed every page from start to finish which I reached much too quickly and would have loved if were three times longer! Vicky writes with a wonderful perspective - she and her husband have moved to an idyllic location in Spain, not of course without its trials and tribulations which are most often hilarious - I laughed out loud many times during the book! She has a lovely eye for detail and characterisation born of respect, fascination and the ever present humour that makes this one thoroughly enjoyable read! I can't recommend it highly enough and I really hope Vicky considers writing "Chickens and Mules... the story continues..." I'd snap it up as I am sure, so would all her fans who have had the pleasure of coming across this lovely story!

Maria (Isabel) McMahon

Abu Dhabi

Angela says

I absolutely loved this book. It's packed with humour and 'feel good' factor, and if you have ever undertaken

moving house to a foreign country this will ring true on so many levels.

Vicky decided that she and her husband, Joe, would move house and live in Spain because she was fed up of the grey days and rain of England. After a little persuasion, Joe agreed to a five year plan of living in Spain with a clause to return to England if they didn't settle for any reason at the end of the agreed term. This book is the first of a series of six (so far) and covers the move from their Sussex home to a tiny village of just five permanent residents in the mountains behind Almeria, to five years later when they have to decide whether to return to the grey skies of England or stay in the home they've made and with the chickens they love.

We meet their lovely neighbours and makers of home made wine, Carmen and Paco, who through a language misunderstanding called Carmen 'Bethina' for several months. We live through the Fiestas, the dancing, the heaviest snowfall since records began, fallen trees across the one treacherous mountain road into the village, and the antics of the 'Gin Twins'. And the chickens – oh, such fun these caused as well as income from their dozens of eggs each week.

Between each chapter is a recipe for typical tasty Spanish tapas, salad, stew etc., complete with instructions of how to make the recipes. This really is an amazing little book and if you go to their website at victoriatwead.com there is a free section with photographs to compliment this book.

Gayle says

I'm so glad I found this little treasure of a book!! It is Victoria Tread's memoir of her and her husband's retirement in Spain. It was her idea and desire to move out of cold, dreary, rainy, foggy England...and to move to a warmer climate (and many additional "pros"). Her husband Joe was not overly excited about the prospect of moving, but they agreed to make it a "Five-Year Plan." After this time, if Joe wasn't happy they would move back to England. While reading this book I felt as though I was living it right along with them - quite an adventure!!! The only thing that surprised me about this book is that one of their acquired chickens was named "the F-word." It was so unexpected, however, when the English say this word it doesn't sound quite like the filthy word it is! Other than that surprise, the book was a sweet, enjoyable diversion!

Debbie says

Subtitled Tuck into a slice of Andalucian Life, Chickens, Mules & Two Old Fools is a personal memoir written by (former) UK resident Victoria Tread.

Tired of the dreary British climate as she and her husband Joe neared retirement, they decided to sell in Britain and move to sunny Spain. The book begins with (Victoria's) discontent with England, the process of their decision to make the move, and their search for the ideal piece of Spanish real estate ("The House"). Finding a reliable real estate agent was aided greatly by their serendipitous meeting with another ex-pat who had lived in Spain for some time.

The Treads found a run-down terrace house with rudimentary bathroom facilities and less-than-that kitchen amenities, in a small village tucked into the mountains. They set about making (extensive) renovations and moving their worldly possessions. They made friends with their neighbours and became acquainted with the villagers and village life, all the while receiving what seems a steady stream of visitors from England.

With a fresh perspective and laugh-out-loud humour, Victoria shares all of this with us.

I tremendously enjoyed reading Chickens & Mules because

- Victoria's voice is down-to-earth. She finds the humour in village life and is not afraid to laugh at herself too. There are also no judgements as to superiorities of one culture over another. I believe this is a key reason the Tweads were successful and happy in their move.
- It was well-written and edited. There are no bumpy repetitions, badly constructed sentences, or annoying typos.
- There are photos! On my Kindle, they are in black and white. On a Kindle Fire , Nook Color, iPad, or other reading device with color graphics, you'll see them in their full glory. BUT. Only a few of the books on my Kindle have a desk-top component – I'm not familiar enough with the technology to know why or why not—and Chickens & Mules is one that does. THAT desk-top copy of the book has colour photos. The paperback version of the book also has b&w pictures, but you can also view them (and MANY others) in colour on Victoria's web-site.
- Victoria includes three dozen yummy-sounding recipes for everything from Spanish Spinach to English Sticky Toffee pudding, with the emphasis on Mediterranean dishes.

I recommend Chickens, Mules & Two Old Fools to anyone who's ever dreamed of moving someplace sunny (and who hasn't it?!), anyone contemplating moving to another country and culture, and to arm-chair travellers, no matter how house-bound; in fact, to anyone who'd like to share a few laughs and a few dreams with a charming couple.

P.S. You can subscribe to a free Village Updates newsletter on Victoria's web-site.

P.P.S. After spending this time getting to know Victoria and Joe, and having viewed the photo of their renovated guestroom, I'd visit too!

Sally906 says

Could very much relate to a lot that went on especially as we start thinking about where we're going to retire to - Spain just a little bit too far from Australia though!!!

Denise says

Chickens, Mules and Two Old Fools proves once again that moving to a foreign country and fixing up an old house never works out quite as you planned. This time the setting is the Spanish Alpujarra mountains and the naive couple are Joe and Vicky, a British couple looking for a place where the sun always shines.

At first the writing struck me as a bit unedited and rough around the edges, but as the book progressed the style grew on me until I wouldn't have had it any other way. Vicky comes across with a refreshing frankness,

leaving nothing out as she and Joe stumble their way into their idyllic, Spanish life.

You haven't properly described the book until you explain how utterly hilarious it is. From the first meeting with their German estate agent where they have to explain that they would like a house with a roof and walls to their hysterical chickens and wacky building contractor with his team of Equators you will be laughing all the way through. I highly recommend this book for a lovely period of escapism. You will thoroughly enjoy hanging out in Spain with Joe and Vicky!

G.J. says

This book would get 3.5 stars if there was a half star system ! Anyway, a light easy read, a bit repetitive for me though, the mention of her husband scratching his "nethers" must score very highly here, if she wrote it once she wrote it tens of times!

I enjoyed the escapades with the chickens and Judith was a hoot, however I feel the author tried too hard for laughs and it just didn't quite work for me.

Lori says

I read this book on my e-reader. this was a fun book. a memoir with humor by Victoria Twead. Vicky is tired of living in her home in England. she yearns to live somewhere else. She is especially interested in living in Spain. she want to live where the weather is more sunny and warmer. It takes a bit to talk her husband Joe in moving so she strikes a proposal: Rent their home in England move to Spain for five years. They would try it out and in five years if Joe did not want to stay, they would move back to England.

With Joe on board they go for the move. they do have some obstacles, the home they buy is in very bad shape it is carved into a big hill their bedroom is inside a hill. actually it is their temporary home until they build one. there is a language barrier they speak little Spanish when they arrive. the shops have limited hours. It is not always warm in Spain.etc.

there are funny parts such as learning to raise chickens.and watching how they interact with each other. talk about "mean girls" these chickens show how mean they can be to each other.

they have some wonderful eccentric neighbors. and just trying to build that new home does not come without obstacles. this was an enjoyable fun read. I liked that fish out of water theme. how different we live from country to country. I will not give away if Joe decides he will stay after five years. one nice treat is the author includes some recipes she learned and sampled while living in Spain.

Dvora says

My original review must have been lost when I had Goodreads technical problems. I thought this was a very charming memoir of the life of a British expat living in Spain. I am an American expat doing the same (although in a different part of Spain) so I could relate to many of the things Twead was saying. And those things she said she said well and with humor. The inclusion of several recipes enhanced the book even more. I have recommended it to others, especially my expat friends here (a couple of whom have read and enjoyed it a lot).

Tejas Janet says

My Rating: Solid 3.5 Stars

While I enjoyed this book, I thought it fell victim to the malaise that often strikes memoirs of the cookbook variety. The narrative, while light and quite readable, felt overly skimpy and repetitive by book's end. The recipes were presented in a separate section in an effort to not disrupt the narrative. However, the result was that the recipes felt almost like an after thought, just tacked on at the end rather than truly integrated into the telling of events. Such is the nature of the author's dilemma in this genre.

Tweed's good-natured book left me wanting both more and less at the same time - more details about the preparation of the specific recipes for example and less repetition and ancillary info. The book initially started out well with the narrative and recipes solidly linked, such as in the telling about making tripe for the pudding contest in El Hoya's big romp of an annual festival, but it all too quickly diverged into two disjointed parts. The end effect is like a separated Hollandaise sauce that, while still tasty, falls short of its fully realized glory, all the more disappointing since you know the basic ingredients are all there, just not quite properly combined.

Karen McCann says

This book is a total charmer about the adventures of a British couple who retire to southern Spain, buy a rural ruin and start raising chickens. I first heard about it as I was finishing my own book about living in southern Spain, *Dancing in the Fountain*. Victoria's book is the flip side of mine: rural vs urban, chickens vs late night flamenco bars, etc. Yet we share an abiding love and appreciation for the zaniness of the Spanish culture. Her book is very funny. After reading it, I began corresponding with Victoria, and we have become pen pals. (Do we still call it that when it's electronic? Somehow keyboard pals just doesn't have the right ring to it.) Recently we did guest blogs on each other's websites, writing about the challenges of house hunting in Spain. Whether you're an armchair traveler or have ever seriously considered buying a crumbling ruin in a foreign country, you'll want to read this book.

Margritte says

This is truly a memoir that inspires a trouble-less *joie de vivre* in the reader.

Most British expats in Spain have a story to tell of cultural clashes, dodgy estate agents, derelict, over-priced houses and a spirit of the conqueror to get themselves acclimatized in a new country with the British culture thriving and intact. After all, they did not leave their culture behind, only their weather.

This book does not differ from any others in this genre in that regard. But Vicky and Joe integrate in El Hoyo by learning Spanish as soon as possible and becoming part of the wallpaper of a life of sunshine, Spanish cooking and chickens as main characters in the book with often laugh-out-loud moments. Making wine, with their neighbors up in the mountains, meeting eccentric characters(for them), selling eggs to their neighbors

from their new chicken family, getting to know a vivacious mule and dogs and cats everywhere, the tale is heartwarming and enchanting. Simple, but delicious recipes are thrown in for good measure and soon the reader wants to cook Spanish. It is just that alluring.

It is a superb New York bestselling expat memoir with a few sequels thrown in.

For the reader it is just a great escape from one reality with another reality turned colorful in another part of the world.

Prima!

Brett Williams says

Highly recommended

I can understand totally why this book got an award. The hilarious characters and the scrapes that Vicky and Joe got themselves into just had me laughing right to the final chapters. If you liked the James Herriot series, you'll like Victoria Tread's take on Spanish life in an Andalucian village. Highly recommended, 5 stars!

Carole says

Adventures Galore

Sent to amazon.com 24.04.10

‘Chickens, Mules and two old fools’ is the apt title of Victoria Tread’s, autobiographical novel about her and her husband Joe’s retirement in Andalucia, Spain. When Vicky first proposed it, Joe was not so sure. The bargain, wrung from a few anxious moments, was they would return to the colder climes of England in five year’s time if it didn’t work out.

I loved the light hearted, amusing atmosphere, the sense of adventure and of beating adversity as the couple moved from their safe, familiar home in Sussex to a broken down house in a village in southern Spain. They set about learning the language and getting to know the remarkable characters that now filled their lives. They populated the orchard with chicken, known as ‘the girls,’ as well as by their more unconventional names. The girls’ antics provided no end of amusement. I wondered what the villagers did for their eggs before The English came along.

Well written, the story flowed smoothly through house renovations and fiestas, beach days and jellyfish, processions and puddings. Peppered in among the text, the stamp sized illustrations added another interest. For those who like recipes with everything, you won’t be disappointed. Neatly ruled off from the main text are a host of Spanish recipes for you to try. I thoroughly enjoyed the read.

I give the book 5 stars for its entertainment value.

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Cherie says

I must have been expecting too much, but I did enjoy the story. Parts were very endearing and some just a little boring for me. I cannot imagine doing this myself. Moving into a house that was crumbling around them and looking forward??? to fixing it up. Total immersion into a country where you barely speak the language? For this couple, it all worked out well in the end.

The view of the little village and the life lived by all was well described as were all of the people, places and events. My favorites were Old Sancho and his cat and the chicken mafia.

I did love reading the recipes and may try several of them! That was a bonus of picking up the book and adding it to my list. I did not realize it was a cook book too.

Maria says

I was lucky enough to win a copy of this book. It's non-fiction, the true tale of a couple who decide to leave England to retire to Spain. There are a few laugh-out-loud moments, and generally the book made me smile. The author made a decision to leave the UK one rainy day. Joe, the author's husband, was not sure about the move, so they compromised, agreeing a 5-year plan. They would move to the remote village of El Hoyo in Andalucía for 5 years and if it didn't work out they would return to the UK. Victoria Twead has a gift for describing people, places and actions so that the reader feels they are actually there. She is a fabulous storyteller. 'Chickens, Mules and Two Old Fools' is a wonderfully entertaining book. I feel as though I know all of the eccentric characters described in the book, and would recognise them all immediately if I took a trip to the village. I would recommend 'Chickens, Mules and Two Old Fools' to everyone, it's a real tonic. Reading the book I almost felt as if I was on holiday, right there in El Hoyo watching these strange and wonderful characters (and animals!). I didn't want the book to end, and in a way it hasn't because interspersed throughout are traditional Spanish recipes, all of which sound delicious and which I will be trying out!

Lilo says

Highly enjoyable read. Review to follow when I have a bit more time.

I, definitely, want to read the sequel(s)--also when I have a bit more time.

Christopher Spalding says

I would liken this book to an episode of Dr Who from the nineteen seventies: the sets were wobbly, the rocks polystyrene and the monsters were made of washing-up gloves and sackcloth, but I still loved it.

To expand on that, the niggles were mostly technical - some formatting problems on the Kindle and the writing wasn't quite as polished as (*IMHO*) it could have been. I think that just goes to show the story is always king.

I have, I suppose, a vested interest as I am probably as much of an *españophile* as the author; maybe that's why I liked it so much. But as far as I'm concerned, that simply made me more ready to accept the invitation to join her on the journey; keeping me entertained on every step was all thanks to her.

The recipes were a surprise, but never detracted from what was going on and, seeing as this was a memoir, why not?

All-in-all, I enjoyed every page, loved the characters and was genuinely moved by many of the described events.

This is the kind of book I would read again, and I don't say that about many books (mostly because there are far too many books I haven't read yet)!
