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An Extraordinary Year: A Journal Of A Student Abroad 1956-1957

An Extraordinary Year
A Journal of a Student Abroad 1956-1957



*Judy
Woodall*



Synopsis

In early September, 1956, Judy Woodall sailed off to Europe with a group of young women, all students at Tulane University's Newcomb College about to experience their Junior Year Abroad. Starting that first night at sea, Judy kept an extraordinarily detailed journal recording her experiences living in Paris and Dijon and her many travels throughout Europe. Through her eyes, we see a post-war Europe still struggling with continuing shortages while the fear of another war simmers in Hungary, and we are with her as she experiences the treasures of European art and music. Reading this journal gives a vivid day-to-day portrayal of a time worth remembering - a time now fading into history.

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Customer Reviews

Reading this journal made me feel as if I were experiencing the excitement of travel, people, history, insights, and food alongside Ms. Woodall. Her detailed descriptions are like magnets, pulling the reader into her life as a young woman abroad, in a more innocent time. Ms. Woodall's quest for learning and making the most of her year abroad, is a delightful read!

This journal contains the joy and delight of a young person abroad for the first time, before television and the internet brought the world to us. The author feels an immediate and intimate connection to France, its people, language, food and the beauty that is everywhere. Any francophile who reads it will feel as though she has found a kindred spirit.

“An Extraordinary Year” becomes an extraordinary read that brings back the years 1956-57 into the present tense. This memoir of a year abroad seen through the eyes of a gifted, spirited, keenly observant college junior barely out of her teens has amazing insights into the depths of experience that beheld her during a year of studies, travel, socializing and eye opening forays into the everyday and cultural life as well as the political aspects of that time in Europe. From the experience of “living” with families of a different culture Judy gleans deep insights into the differences and the “sameness” in the lives of people whom she is fortunate to be enmeshed with, sometimes very good and sometimes more difficult but always with insight into the various personalities that are part of the experience. The writing is very “immediate” in that it seems to have been written “in the present” so that one would seem to be reading one of her most recent letters home. Except of course when describing the cost of several lengthy trips to various other countries where one can stay in a very nice hotel for perhaps \$5. per day, probably with 2 meals and almost private bath. Or where one can have a fine meal with “delicious” wine for less than \$2. and a taxi across town costs less than \$1. Imagine 18 days in Switzerland, Austria and Germany including travel, hotels and 2 meals per day \$120. The times have “changed”. An excellent and always interesting glimpse into an era long gone that most of us have never seen or would even imagine by today’s standards and mores.

Woodall does a first rate job of writing her debut publication that thoroughly and delightfully describes young Americans in Europe in 1956-57. This memoir gave me a detailed impression of personal and historical events happening to students abroad in the 1950s, an era which I have little familiarity with, myself being born in the 1980s. I could not put this book down, nor keep from chuckling as I tried to imagine myself as Woodall during the time. In addition, Woodall’s book educated me on period details of France, Switzerland, Spain, Italy, Germany and the UK in the 1950s as well as a thorough understanding of trends in classical music live performances and performers. I would recommend this book to both former and future students on journeys abroad,

parents of students abroad, music and French aficionados, those heading to Europe for vacation, and anyone looking for a light, yet historical piece to read for leisure. Kudos to Woodall on a wonderful read!

I just finished reading "An Extraordinary Year" and was so taken in by the detailed descriptions and keen observations of the very wise-beyond-her-years 20 year old! Having visited very many of the places Ms. Woodall described in her journey, I enjoyed seeing them again through the eyes of a young girl... very excited, fun-loving, but wise beyond her years. Her ability to 'read' the people she encountered and understand the history behind, & importance of the ART in all of its form she was immersed in daily, was nothing short of inspired. A great read which is highly recommended!

In this age of cell phones, it is difficult to imagine a young student abroad writing her parents daily with details of her experience, yet it happened. Fortunately those letters survived and are woven into a delightful memoir. Ms Woodall describes in great detail the sights and sounds of her travels. The appeal to me is the wonder and naivet   this small town American girl conveys to her family at home. A delightful read.

Am amazing adventure! After reading Judy's detailed descriptions of her daily life during her year abroad I felt as though I had been there too. Kudos to this spunky, intelligent, courageous and talented redhead!!

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