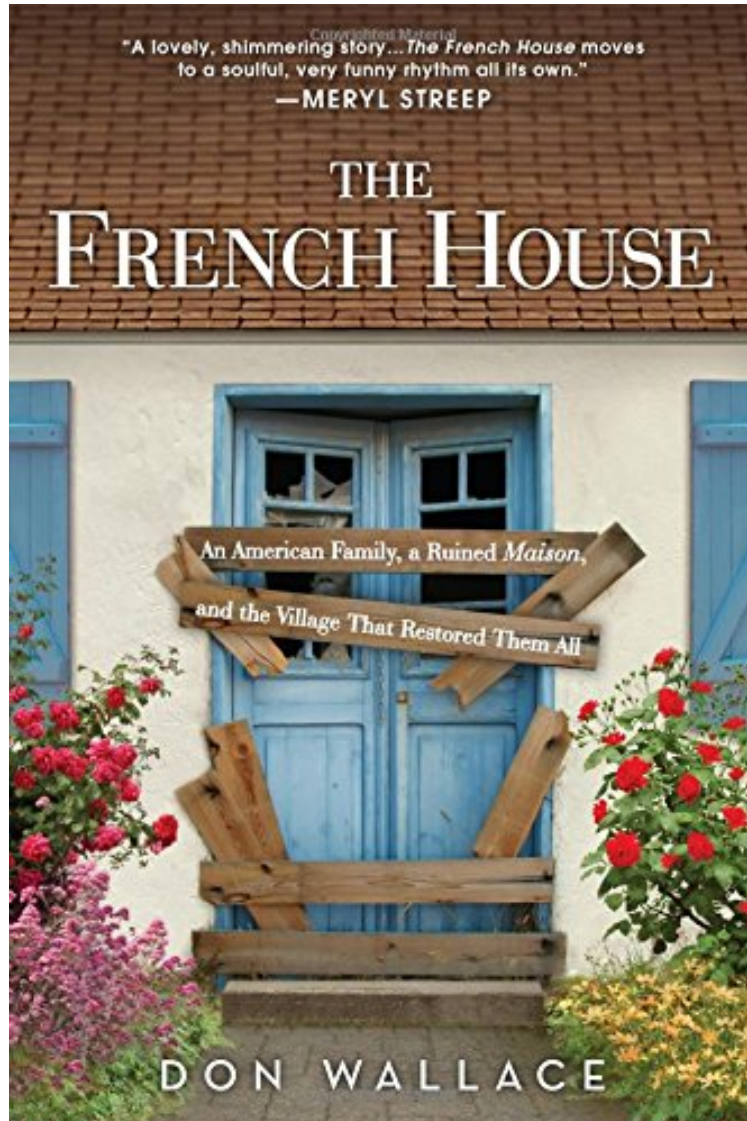


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The French House

Don Wallace

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#326962 in Books Don Wallace 2014-06-03 2014-06-03 Original language: English PDF # 1 8.00 x 5.00 x 1.00l, .80 #File Name: 1402293313336 pages The French House An American Family a Ruined Maison and the Village That Restored Them All | File size: 68.Mb

Don Wallace : The French House before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The French House:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. There is poetry here, among the ruins, as the French House is restored! By D. Guenther Exquisitely written, this author clearly has followed the light of the glowworm down a country lane, through the fragrant hedgerows and fields. This absorbing memoir is about the web of connections to the

French House of the title, social, psychological, historical, and geographical. It is a well-crafted story about both family and place, of how place shapes family over time, and how one cannot arrive at a place and not become shaped by its history and charm, becoming one with that place through their own evolution. The reader also discovers Belle Isle off the Brittany coast, with its unique beauty and culture, as the author reworks time and memory to capture stunning descriptions of the environs as well as share luminous moments of insight, looking back over a lifetime. There is poetry here, among the ruins, as well as much humor, as the French House is restored. And I loved the unfolding, clever format of this book. Excellent read! Dan Guenther 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A great guidebook to the quirks of a tiny French island off the coast of Brittany! By Joanna McKenna The basic plot: girl of Korean descent in a dysfunctional family from Hawaii and a boy from a dysfunctional family in Southern California meet in college in Iowa, eventually marry and with no money to speak of, tromp around Europe for awhile before settling down in New York City in a two-room illegal-sublet apartment, he as a writer for various publications, she as an attorney. The last stop in their travels was a tiny island off Brittany called Belle Ile, where they're stranded due to lack of funds for most of a winter but fall in love with it anyway. They're befriended by a prominent local woman with whom they maintain contact after they return to the "Real World", a woman who believes all Americans are filthy rich, a fact that doesn't apply to Don and Mindy but they don't correct the woman's assumption. They save their pennies and return to the island each summer, discovering on their first trip back that one cove is perfect for the surfing they've both loved since childhood. Surfing so great that their dream is to some day have own a home on the island. When what amounts to a ruin comes up for sale at a price they can't pass up, on the local woman's recommendation they use all their meager savings to buy it sight unseen, having no idea it'll cost a fortune to make it livable and in compliance with France's laws and the island's building codes. Meanwhile Mindy becomes pregnant with their only child, a son. They really need a larger apartment in NYC but can't afford one thanks to their financial commitment to the house in France. Eight years will pass before they'll ever sleep under its roof. If one can ignore the fact that they voluntarily lived like paupers in NYC for most of two decades to be able to afford month-long annual trips to the island as well as renovating a ruin, the book is a delightful take on the quirks of life in a tiny French village on a tiny island off the beaten path and its odd assortment of eccentric locals. Foodies will enjoy the accounts of meals comprised only of whatever was ripe in the village's gardens that day or on offer at the farmers markets and shops in the larger towns. I could only give it 4 stars because it tended to wander in places it shouldn't have, and also because English translations of many of the ubiquitous French phrases weren't included for readers not fluent in French. (To be fair, my comprehension of French *did* improve somewhat even without the translations.) 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. 100% A Must Read! An American's French Endless Summer ... Charming, Funny, Insightful By M. Ferguson Honestly I read the first 10 pages and thought I wasn't going to like this book as I was worried I had mistakenly picked a how-to book about vacationing abroad and the chaotic life of raising a family. (Boy, was I completely wrong!!!) Still, once I start a book I feel I should finish it. Thus, I decided to read ten pages a day. At the end of day two I realized I had read 100 pages and wanted to read "a little more" before bedtime. I read another 50 pages. In other words, this book climbs inside you and never disappoints. Many times I paused just to enjoy envisioning surfing or socializing or wandering through the island. The writing is crisp, lush with imagery that creates a full physical, emotional and psychological environment while taking great care to lead you through the foibles and triumphs of an American couple who dare to buy a "fixer-upper" in France. And, if you think buying one in your own country is a dubious idea, wait until you read this true story ... luckily there's a lot of love, humor, friendship and adventure making this story a great read with a heart and a hidden lesson for all of us. I was actually sad the book didn't have a sequel ... big obvious hint for the writer to note!

"On a tiny French island, a couple of American dreamers redefine their lives by restoring a ruin...The French House moves to a soulful, very funny rhythm all its own." -Meryl Streep Don and Mindy Wallace have always been Francophiles, so when they had the opportunity to buy a home on a small French island off the coast of Brittany, they jumped-sight unseen-into a crumbling mess that challenged their finances and their family. But when the Wallaces arrived on the island they found a building in ruin, and it wasn't long before their lives resembled it. Plagued by emergency repairs, a stock market crash, and very exasperated French neighbors, Don and Mindy could have accepted their fate. Instead, they embraced it. Redolent with the beauty and flavors of French country life, The French House is a lively, inspiring, and irresistibly charming memoir. Fans of *Under the Tuscan Sun* (Frances Mayes), *Paris in Love* (Eloisa James), and *A Year in Provence* (Peter Mayle) will be enchanted by this account of a family that rises from the rubble, wins the hearts of a historic village, and finally finds the home they've been seeking off the wild coast of France. What readers are saying about *The French House* "The French House is engaging and well-written and will make even non-Francophiles yearn for a trip to France." "With hauntingly beautiful descriptions of a tiny French island and its inhabitants, this book will take you to a different place, and might even inspire you to reconsider your life and finally follow your dreams where you and your family can become whole." "...charming and witty -- full of hope and despair about this crumbling structure they chose to inhabit and make a home." "I was captivated from the outset and felt like I was on their island living it all with them. A great read!" What reviewers are saying about *The*

French House" Don Wallace has crafted a delicious French bonbon of a book...full of humor, hope, and lessons on how to live a life full of meaning." - Dani Shapiro, bestselling author of *Devotion* and *Still Writing* "Village life vignettes, the sensual celebration of island pleasures, eccentric neighbors, cuisine, beach life, natural history-readers will find a smattering of all that in these pages, but it's the story below, like the unshakeable foundations of the house itself, that makes this such a satisfying read." - Rain Taxi Review "The French House is a darling book that mixes local history, memoir, quirky characters, architectural challenges (what will the village elders do if they add windows to the second floor?) and humor...It was a lovely adventure and perfect for a summer read." - Under a Gray Sky "The French House is a detailed, delightful memoir of their journey to restore a dilapidated abode into a beckoning sanctuary in an idyllic coast French countryside.. I have thoroughly been devouring it, and I think you will too." - The Simply Luxurious Life "Author Don Wallace shares the heartwarming story about his family's 30-year journey to restore a ruined cottage on the tiny French island of Belle Ile off the coast of Brittany... readers are privy to the charming true story of a family's journey to create the perfect home away from home." - E! News

From Booklist As part of a lengthy European sojourn, Mindy and Don Wallace spend a few weeks on Belle Ile, an obscure island off Brittany's southern coast in the Bay of Biscay, where they fall in love with both the wild landscape and the locals. Having resumed their careers in New York, they receive a letter from a woman they had befriended on the island. She tells them that a house has become available for sale in the small village they'd visited on Belle Ile. They mortgage themselves to buy the property, really a ruin, and begin long-distance plans to restore the house. Then their Manhattan apartment building goes co-op. What should have generated a financial windfall for them turns sour when the recession hits. The arrival of a baby adds to their stress, and their French project balloons into a multiyear, cash-consuming, transatlantic endeavor before the house is finally ready for occupancy. --Mark Knoblauch "On a tiny French island, a couple of American dreamers redefine their lives by restoring a ruin-which in this lovely, shimmering story becomes a parable of a saner, greener, more sustainable path that we all can follow if we will but listen to the wisdom of the villagers the way the Wallaces did. The French House moves to a soulful, very funny rhythm all its own." - Meryl Streep "The French House is a brave, insightful and very amusing memoir about a fantasy that many of us have had but not dared to attempt. The only problem with it is that now I want to adopt myself into the Wallace family." - Jane Smiley, New York Times bestselling author and winner of the Pulitzer Prize "In this beautifully-written, rich, moving story of a fabulous, resourceful and utterly original family, Don Wallace has crafted a delicious French bon-bon of a book. THE FRENCH HOUSE is full of humor, hope, and I dare say, lessons on how to live a life full of meaning. I loved it." - Dani Shapiro, bestselling author of *Devotion* and *Still Writing* "Don and Mindy Wallace had always been Francophiles, so when they had the opportunity to buy a home on a small French island, they leaped sight unseen - into a crumbling mess that challenged their finances and family." - Los Angeles Times "Abundant reflection on the nature of quiet village life is nicely juxtaposed by commentary on the eccentric neighbors and other inhabitants of the island. Although change inevitably comes to the island, for the Wallaces, their little cottage will always be home." - Shelf Awareness for Readers "The French House isn't a memoir. It's a vacation. Charming, gorgeous, perceptive, it is peppered with unforgettable characters and steeped in the deep red wine of long-term friendship, showing us how a remarkable place can make a life worth living. You will never want to leave Belle Ile or Don Wallace's inspiring tale of holding onto a dream despite overwhelming adversity." - Jennie Fields, author of *The Age of Desire* "A journalist and fiction writer's account of how a crumbling house he bought on a French island became his family's unexpected refuge and salvation...Warm, funny and full of heart." - Kirkus "The only question is which you'll fall in love with first, Don Wallace's plucky family, or the enchanted French island on which they (re)build their dream house. Lyrical, funny, and poignant, THE FRENCH HOUSE is the next best thing to an extended vacation by the sea." - Kevin Baker, bestselling author of *The Big Crowd* "Author Don Wallace shares the heartwarming story about his family's 30-year journey to restore a ruined cottage on the tiny French island of Belle Ile off the coast of Brittany... readers are privy to the charming true story of a family's journey to create the perfect home away from home." - E! News "Wallace's ability to articulate the honest struggle that most people face while trying to find their place in life combined with his breathtaking descriptions of the French isle's landscape make this a perfect summer read." - Bella Magazine "Funny touching and tremendous fun." - Cayocosta72 "You've never been any place as beguiling as Don Wallace's Belle Ile. He's a funny, literate raconteur with a story full of fine twists, soulful turns, and fantastic neighbors." - William Finnegan, author of *Cold New World* "I, for one, found myself happy to read a story of persistence commitment from a small family. They dramatically changed their life forever with a single decision and the tenacity to see their plans through to fruition. The French House is a great read for those of you, like me, who have ever considered moving abroad and living La Dolce Vita." - Life in a Venti Cup "It reminded me a bit like Under the Tuscan Sun. This family has a wreck of a house that they are going to rebuild. I mean they have to it was meant to be, they knew that this was what they were suppose to do. However they also need to rebuild themselves a bit. This maison, this village and the lovely french country side are just what they need!" - Gidget's Bookshelf "I love armchair travelling, and this story provided that in exquisite form - through Don Wallace's words, you don't just get to picture the setting of Kebordardoue, but you also get to know all the lively and somewhat eccentric characters that people this

village. " - Zee Monodee "The French House is a detailed, delightful memoir of their journey to restore a dilapidated abode into a beckoning sanctuary in an idyllic coast French countryside. Written in such a way that you can enjoy it on your own summer getaway, put it down and come back to it at your leisure without missing a beat, I have thoroughly been devouring it, and I think you will too." - The Simply Luxurious Life About the Author Don Wallace was born in Long Beach, California and has spent most of his life as a journalist and editor in New York City and Honolulu-that is, when not in France. He is the author of four books including the novel Hot Water and One Great Game: Two Teams, Two Dreams, in the First-Ever High School Football National Championship Game. His essays, articles and fiction have appeared in such various publications as Harper's, The New York Times, SELF, Fast Company, Wine Spectator and Naval History. You can visit DonWallaceFranceBlog.tumblr.com for updates on Belle Ile-en-Mer.