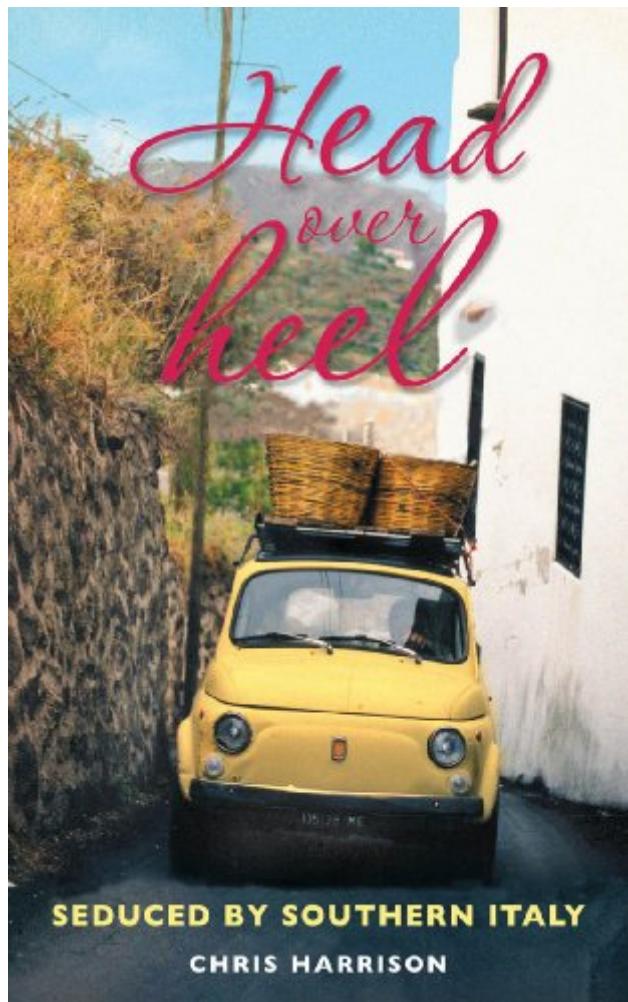


The book was found

Head Over Heel: Seduced By Southern Italy



Synopsis

After falling in love with la bella Daniela, Chris Harrison uproots his life to follow her to her small hometown on the coast of Puglia and live la dolce vita. Can their relationship possibly survive the eccentric cast of characters they encounter or will the sweet life turn sour? This is an enchanting tale of amore, Italian style.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I am definitely an arm chair traveler at this point in my life. Living in suburbia with a teenage daughter very involved in extra-curricular activities, there hasn't been a lot of time or opportunity to travel so I feed that part of my soul by reading travel narratives. Bill Bryson and Frances Mayes are two writers that I have enjoyed over the years and Chris Harrison is actually a blend of the two in my opinion. Chris (or Chris in Italy), is an Australian who falls for an Southern Italian woman (Daniela) while visiting Ireland. The result of that chance meeting is his decision to move to Italy to be with her and see how the relationship progresses. While the relationship is the catalyst for the move and it for the narrative, and it takes a major role in the narrative, it doesn't dominate the story like it could have. Largely focused on the first year or two of his transition to living in Italy, this is an incredible piece of writing by a very talented man. The reader is able to walk along beside the writer as he

deals with all that is wonderful and terrible in his adopted country. One of the great strengths of this piece is the unvarnished truth of Italian life - some is wonderful, some is horrible (the visit to the hospital stands out here), and often it's both at the same time. While Frances Mayes has a romantic view of life there, which is supported by a fair amount of money it appears, this book is more about what life is like for the common man. To be honest, I actually picked this book up once and put it down after reading just a few pages. Initially, I thought it had too much "man ogling beautiful Italian goddess" for my taste but that wasn't representative of the vast majority of the book.

The book jacket of Head Over Heel promises a "hilarious and captivating story" that features "[a] whitewashed fishing village, a shapely signorina and an infatuated young man -- head over heels on the heel of the boot." And boy does this book deliver. Head Over Heel is a sweet, funny love letter from Aussie Chris Harrison to both his Italian wife Daniela and her country, which he, erm, has a special relationship with -- the kind I think many of us expats in Italy can understand. Harrison shares tales from his two years of courtship with Daniela, a Puglian gal he met in Ireland and then followed home to the heel of the boot. Yes, Daniela comes from one of *those* small towns with the gorgeous scenery, peculiar characters, and happenstance encounters, and Harrison does an excellent job of vividly painting each scene from ridiculous meetings with the lollipop police (carabinieri for the uninitiated) to the over-the-top religious festivals that his wife actually shuns. I love that many of Daniela (and her father's) ideas run counter to southern Italian stereotypes -- but not always and not totally, which simply enriches the book even more. Harrison is a keen observer and brilliant writer, and as someone who happens to live in a similar small town in southern Italy, I found myself laughing and nodding along in agreement quite often. His portrayal of southern Italians is never condescending though, as he repeatedly acknowledges that his reality and frames of references are simply different from theirs -- this is not an easy balance to strike, and I commend Harrison for the respect and love that shine through his words even when his criticisms might otherwise be considered biting.

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