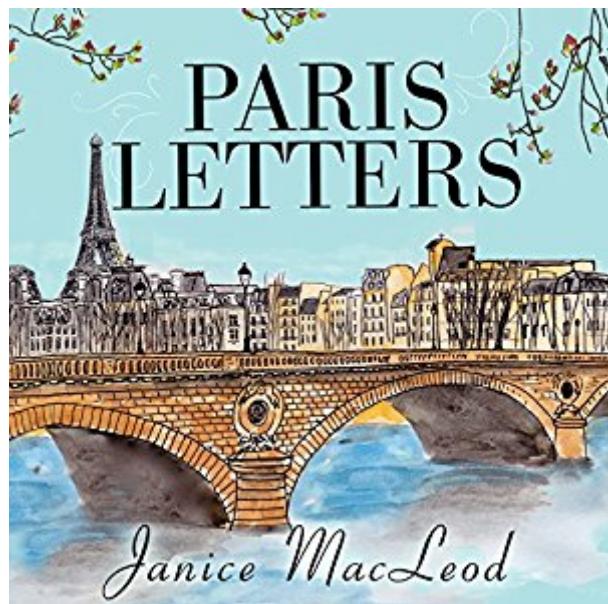


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# Paris Letters



## **Synopsis**

How much money does it take to quit your job? Exhausted and on the verge of burnout, Janice poses this question to herself as she doodles on a notepad at her desk. Surprisingly, the answer isn't as daunting as she expected. With a little math and a lot of determination, Janice cuts back, saves up, and buys herself two years of freedom in Europe. A few days into her stop in Paris, Janice meets Christophe, the cute butcher down the street - who doesn't speak English. Through a combination of sign language and Franglais, they embark on a whirlwind Paris romance. She soon realizes that she can never return to the world of 12-hour workdays and greasy corporate lingo. But her dwindling savings force her to find a way to fund her dreams again. So Janice turns to her three loves - words, art, and Christophe - to figure out a way to make her happily-ever-after in Paris last forever.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

If ever there were a book I'd love to climb inside, an author through whom I could live vicariously, it's Janice MacLeod and PARIS LETTERS. After climbing the metaphorical advertising ladder in Los Angeles, Janice realizes her "dream job" -- and dream life -- aren't quite what she imagined. Worn out by her 9-to-5 and dreaming of so much more than a dull commute and another birthday cake for a coworker, she begins to fantasize about a life beyond the square walls of her office. Encouraged to journal her thoughts and think about something more, a question rises to the surface: How much money does it take to change your life? The answer is roughly 60K, actually -- enough to quit her

job, sell most of her worldly possessions and leave California for a walkabout in Europe. By scrimping wherever possible, she amasses enough to arrive in Paris and walk sip creamy lattes in the sidewalk cafes just as she imagined. Though she speaks no French, her arrival in the City of Light isn't burdened by language barriers. She soon meets Christophe, a handsome butcher, and begins her French education rather romantically. When she considered her talents back in America, one passion kept returning to her: art. Painting. With the time and freedom to now explore those dreams, she sets to work cultivating and fashioning an entirely new life for herself. And the results are pretty extraordinary. How to describe my love for PARIS LETTERS? Picture me in my pajamas sipping coffee on a snowy day, imagining what it must feel like to step off a plane with only a tiny suitcase in a foreign city -- unburdened, untethered, totally free. Though I love my own work, I know the constraints of a desk job all too well. The idea of abandoning it all to chase your passions -- in Paris! -- holds an allure I can't deny. For Janice, shedding her old skin and finding love in France is revelatory. Who among us can't relate to holding that holy grail of professional accomplishment -- that "I did it!" cup declaring you finally met a longstanding goal -- only to realize . . . you're not happy? It isn't what you wanted after all? If the joy is in the journey, reaching the end of that journey -- job stability; boring routines -- isn't actually so joyous in the end. And that's okay. Janice's experiences in Europe are absolutely enchanting -- and I'm going to be honest here. It's been a long time since I read a Paris- or London-themed book that didn't make me green and rage-y with jealousy. Usually when I read a memoir about an American/Canadian upending their lives to eat macarons, write and paint abroad with a seemingly unending pile of cash, I think, "Oh, golly -- must be freakin' nice." But here? All I felt about Janice's story was complete enchantment. She's down-to-earth, friendly, funny, interesting. Writing honestly about both her feelings on leaving behind her old life and the stress of beginning a new one (and with a new man), I bonded with Janice immediately -- and that's all to say nothing of her actual Paris letters, which she paints, writes and addresses to subscribers through Etsy. When I finished PARIS LETTERS, I made a mad scramble to see if her work is still available online -- and it is! And my delight will continue. Recommended to fans of contemporary memoirs, armchair travelers, francophiles, dreamers . . . anyone who has imagined giving up a life of desk-bound duty for adventure. One I'll be sharing with friends for sure in 2014.

With a single suitcase in hand, former Californian copywriter Janice Macleod abandons her stultifying career and heads off to Europe sharing her journey in this memoir, Paris Letters. Thirty four and single Macleod realised that despite her successful career as middle management in an

advertising agency affording her a (more than) comfortable lifestyle, she was dissatisfied with her life. In 2010 inspired by *The Artist's Way* written by Julie Cameron and a comment from a colleague, Janice began making plans to reinvent her life. She began by journaling (and blogging) every day and devising ways to save \$100 a day to fund a years travel. A year later she quit her job and took off to explore Europe. *Paris Letters* is a record of Janice Macleod's journey which includes brief treks through Scotland and Italy before she decides to settle in France, having met a French-speaking Polish butcher on the streets of Paris and fallen in love. Having found happiness but needing a way to fund her prolonged stay in Paris, she takes inspiration from artist Percy Kelly and his illustrated letters to his penpal. Utilising an Etsy store front begins creating and selling letters adorned with her watercolour paintings of Paris scenery quickly amassing over 1,000 subscribers. By the end of 2012, Janice is engaged to Christophe, has a book deal and is living her dream. In many ways this is an inspirational memoir of a woman who has changed her life for the better, in others I feel that *Paris Letters* is somewhat disingenuous. It could be that I'm jealous. Macleod manages to save in a year (nearly US\$65,000), more than my husband earns to support our family of six, while still paying for rent, utilities, car payments, a housekeeper(!) and general living expenses, despite her pared down lifestyle. While I do admire Macleod's commitment to her goal, which was achieved with some sacrifice and hard work, few would have the opportunity to emulate her success and the author fails to acknowledge her privileged position. It's also clear that Macleod always intended to write a book about her experience (she has previously co-authored two books) but it would be mean spirited to begrudge the author her success, and happiness. *Paris Letters* is a charming memoir, an inspiration for office drones everywhere and ideal for Francophiles who dream of escaping the daily grind to live in City of Light.

What a delightful read! A memoir, a travel log, a romance, a self-help guide, all rolled into one exquisite and delicate confection. I breezed my way through Janice MacLeod's graceful, intimate, and humorous writing, almost oblivious to the fact that what I was reading was a piece of non-fiction. *Paris Letters*, in fact, hardly reads as a biography as it features all the alluring traits of a modern fairy-tale: an heroine on the run to escape the 'ogre' of a dreary every-day life routine, a false hero (her ex boyfriend), a quest in foreign lands (her journey to self-discovery through France, Scotland, and Italy), a Prince Charming, and a 'happily ever after'. Occasionally fashioned in epistolary form and light-hearted in its essence, *Paris Letters* is the perfect Valentine's Day read, a great fit for armchair travellers and lovers of Euro glam and all things French.\*\*\*ARC review copy graciously offered by the publisher via NetGalley in return for an unbiased and honest opinion.

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