



Provence

Lawrence Durrell

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Lawrence Durrell, who was called “one of the [twentieth] century’s great literary pyrotechnicians” (Kenneth McLeish, *London Times*), was also one of its most accomplished travel writers. Durrell lived in Provence for thirty years and was its leading literary expatriate long before others discovered that magical wedge of land. In this, his final book, he has left a dazzling testament that distills its essence and conveys its savors as no other work in the English language.

Durrell’s Provence is saturated with the spirits of civilizations past. In the countryside, the marketplace, and among the people, he listens to — and conveys for us — echos of the battles of Roman generals like Caesar and Agrippa, the love of Petrarch for Laura, the debates of the medieval Courts of Love, and the lyrics of the troubadours. He relates the significance of ruins strewn across Provence, which for him is nothing less than the crucible where the European sensibility was forged, and he discusses such topics as bull worship, black magic, alchemy, the Provençal language, Buffalo Bill’s friendship with the poet Mistral, who was Provence’s Nobel laureate, the beauty of Arlesian women, and the game of boules. *Provence* is a monument to the author and to the region, and is essential reading for any traveler seeking to understand the spirit of the place.

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