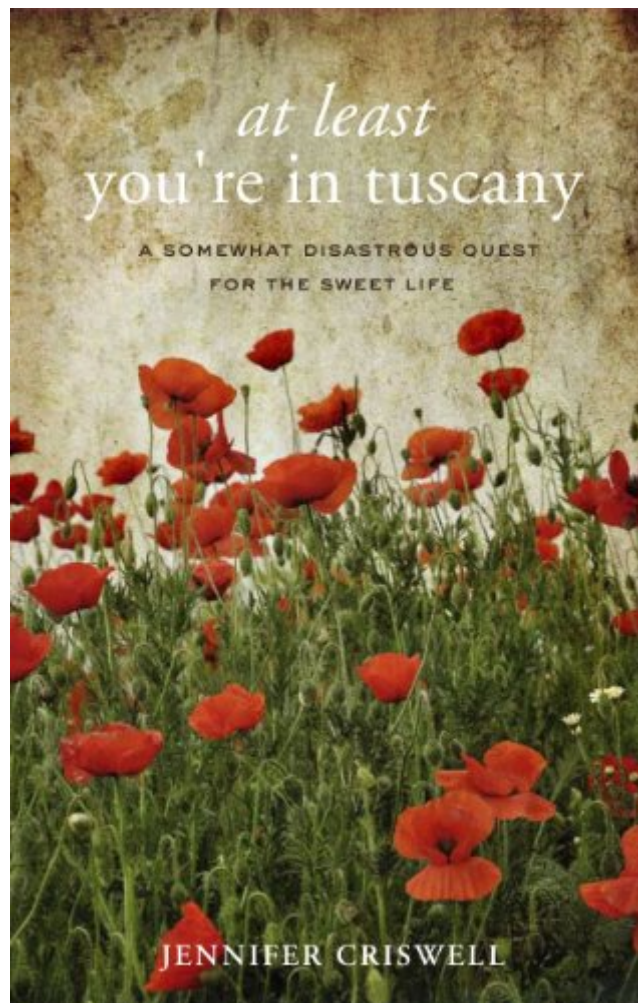




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At Least You're In Tuscany: A Somewhat Disastrous Quest For The Sweet Life



Synopsis

Endless fields of flame-like poppies. Vino Nobile di Montepulciano. The sweet, rhythmic chime of church bells. Months upon months of unemployment? Struggling to communicate with locals? Duvets frozen on the clothesline? Jennifer Criswell's move from New York City to Tuscany was not supposed to go like this. She had envisioned lazy mornings sipping espresso while penning a best-selling novel and jovial group dinners, just like in the movies and books about expatriate life in Italy. Then she met reality: no work, constant struggles with Italian bureaucracy to claim citizenship through her ancestors, and perhaps worst of all, becoming the talk of the town after her torrid affair with a local fruit vendor. *At Least You're in Tuscany* is the intimate, honest, and often hilarious tale of Jennifer's first year in Montepulciano. During that time, Jennifer's internal optimist was forced to work overtime, reminding her that if she were going to be homeless, lonely, and broke, at least she would be all those things - in Tuscany. Through all her small-town bumbblings, though, Jennifer's mantra, along with a healthy dose of enthusiasm and willingness to learn about Italian culture, helped her not only build a new, rewarding life in Italy but also find herself along the way.

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Customer Reviews

"As the barista set my espresso down, he smiled, so I decided it might be appropriate to try out one of my practiced phrases. 'Mi sono appena trasferita a Montepulciano.' I've just moved to Montepulciano, I smiled, resisting the urge to apologize for my horrible Italian. 'Perche?' he asked, looking genuinely puzzled. I'd fielded this question a lot in February when I'd said I was moving here. Locals seemed bewildered that anyone would want to come and live in their town. 'Sono scrittrice.' I told him. I'm a writer. Then I added, 'Cercavo pace.' I was looking for peace. This didn't begin to express all the reasons why I loved Italy, but it was all I could manage. I would have liked to explain that I was supposed to be here, but I didn't know exactly how to say that, which is just as well because I probably seemed kooky enough already. 'Ma per sempre?' he insisted. Yes, I told him, I was planning to be here forever. He looked at me speculatively, then extended his hand to welcome me and introduce himself: 'Benvenuta! Sono Stefano.'"

This is an example of how Jennifer Criswell writes. She's honest, sincere, and very down to earth. Her tale of being an ex-pat isn't like those others where someone with a lot of money buys an old farm house to renovate and moans and groans about carpenters not showing up, or water heaters not heating the water, or being unable to get over the usual bureaucratic pitfalls they inevitably have. No. Jenny, as the locals come to call her, tells the reader just what it's like to hunt for an affordable apartment to rent, wait for most of her belongings to be mailed from New York City to Montepulciano, run frighteningly low on funds, worry about getting a job (any job), and has to eat canned tuna every day in order to survive. Through it all, she manages to stay mostly lighthearted and optimistic. Jenny does find comfort in her best friend which happens to be her Weimaraner Cindy. Both girl and dog manage to win the hearts of Italians and other ex-pats alike. Jenny also is a pretty decent cook and enjoys baking brownies and other tasty treats for her new found friends. I enjoyed this book and think others here looking for something that's light and entertaining will too. O...Jenny writes a blog with more of her interesting adventures in and thoughts about living in Italy. Look her up. 4 Stars

I enjoyed this book. It wasn't my favorite, but it was "real". Its a story of someone without buckets of money to move on whim. This woman took time and effort to plan this move out, and stuck it out with little financial help until things worked out with the slow moving Italian government process.. Much more relatable to my world than the wealthy American moves to Europe crowd, who then all write books. Not much about their lives connects with mine. Jennifer actually struggled to fulfill her dream, with many helps and hindrances along the way. I actually wondered when I got to the end, how things worked out for her and her dog. I have not wondered at all about the others. Its good to know you CAN do it without tons of money, and buying and renovating .

This was such an enjoyable book and easy to read. I felt like I was sitting with a girlfriend chatting over a bottle of Pinot Grigio and hearing about her recent move to Italy. Anyone who visits Italy probably has at the very least a fleeting thought of packing up and moving there. This is a story of someone who did just that—packed up and set down roots in a foreign country. But instead of the oh-so-overdone fairy tale of a young woman who moves to Italy, renovates a Tuscan villa, falls in love and lives happily ever after, this book is a realistic account of what it takes to pack up and move to somewhere where you don't know anyone or even speak the language. How do you learn the language? What do you do for work when your funds get crucially low? How do you navigate the long and convoluted process of gaining citizenship? We don't think about the day to day when we're daydreaming! This book, however, finds complete entertainment in the minutiae of daily life. I found this book to be very well written and not overdone in any way. It was peppered with just enough Italian words, the stories didn't seem over-embellished, and character development was well done. I enjoyed it very much and I'm looking forward to the sequel...or at least another book by this adventurous author.

As a fellow American of Italian heritage, I've often found myself wondering what it would be like to move to Italy (you know, in eight years when my daughter enters college). Through Jennifer Criswell's intimate writing style, I no longer have to wonder what it's like to experience life in Tuscany as an expat. Criswell's glimpse into her struggles while trying to begin a new life in Montepulciano made me feel like I had made the trip with her. So evocative is the worlds she writes about, I feel as if I already know her fellow townspeople, felt the warm Tuscan sun bake my skin, and had my duvet freeze on the winter clothes-line. Having honeymooned in Rome, Florence and Venice, I've longed to return to Italy and this time experience Tuscany in all its glory. For my actual summer vacation this year I was in "exotic" Delaware, which is why I chose to take *At Least You're In Tuscany* as my summer read. At least each night before bed, I was transported to Tuscany. Thank you Jennifer Criswell for my summer journey. Add this book to your cart now, you won't be disappointed!

I am an American expat currently living in Prague, CZ, but in full disclosure, my dream is to live in Italy as well. With that said, I stumbled upon this book as I was preparing for my honeymoon in Spain and I honestly couldn't put it down. Ms. Criswell and I have several things in common for which I could easily relate. I too spent a number of years in NYC and while I loved that experience,

like many, I too wanted a more authentic life experience and have been in love with Italy since my very first trip to Italy in 2008. The trials and tribulations that Ms. Criswell details are in fact, not too dissimilar from my own experience moving abroad. She has a gift for writing about life with a terrific sense of humor and a great deal of authenticity. I highly recommend this book to anyone who has ever dreamed of a similar experience or simply wants a book that allows for a little of la dolce vita...

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