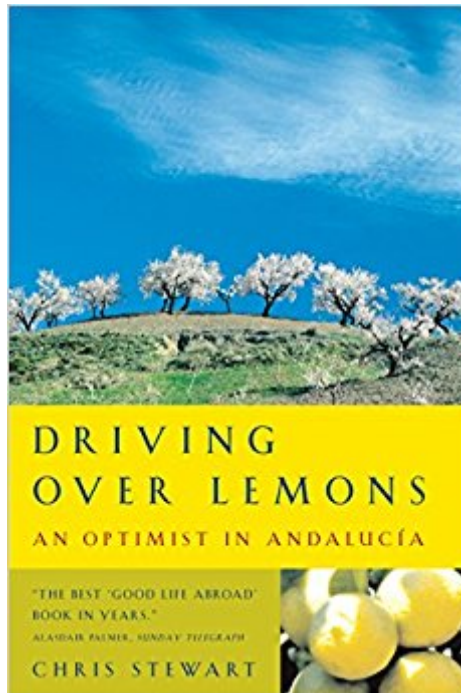




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Driving Over Lemons: An Optimist In Andalusia



Synopsis

Meet Chris Stewart, the eternal optimist. At age 17 Chris retired as the drummer of Genesis and launched a career as a sheep shearer and travel writer. He has no regrets about this. Had he become a big-time rock star he might never have moved with his wife Ana to a remote mountain farm in Andalucia. Nor forged the friendship of a lifetime with his resourceful peasant neighbour Domingo...not watched his baby daughter Chloe grow and thrive there...nor written this book. Fate does sometimes seem to know what it's up to. "Driving Over Lemons" is that rare thing: a funny, insightful book that charms you from the first page to the last...and one that makes running a peasant farm in Spain seem like a distinctly good move. Chris transports us to Las Alpujarras, an oddball region south of Granada, and into a series of misadventures with an engaging mix of peasant farmers and shepherds, New Age travellers and ex-pats. The hero of the piece, however, is the farm that he and Ana bought, El Valero - a patch of mountain studded with olive, almond and lemon groves, sited on the wrong side of a river, with no access road, water supply or electricity. Could life offer much better than that?

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Customer Reviews

When English sheep shearer Chris Stewart (once a drummer for Genesis) bought an isolated farmhouse in the mountains outside of Granada, Spain, he was fully aware that it didn't have electricity, running water, or access to roads. But he had little idea of the headaches and hilarity that would follow (including scorpions, runaway sheep, and the former owner who won't budge). He also had no idea that his memoir about southern Spain would set a standard for literary travel writing.

This rip-roaringly funny book about seeking a place in an earthy community of peasants and shepherds gives a realistic sense of the hassles and rewards of foreign relocation. Part of its allure stems from the absence of rose-colored glasses, mainly Stewart's refusal to merely coo about the piece of heaven he's found or to portray all residents as angels. Stewart's hilarious and beautifully written passages are deep in their honest perceptions of the place and the sometimes xenophobic natives, whose reception of the newcomers ranges from warm to gruff. After reading about struggles with dialects, animal husbandry, droughts, flooding, and such local rituals as pig slaughters and the rebuilding of bridges, you may not wish to live Chris Stewart's life. But you can't help but admire him and his wife, Ana, for digging out a niche in these far-flung mountains, for successfully befriending the denizens, and for so eloquently and comically telling the truth. The rich, vibrant, and unromanticized candor of *Driving over Lemons* makes it a laudable standout in a genre too often typified by laughable naiveté. --Melissa Rossi --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Stewart, a former drummer in Genesis, middle-aged travel writer and professional sheepshearer, never quite explains why he and his wife, Ana, decided to quit England 11 years ago for a dilapidated farm without electricity, water or even a road in Andalucía, Spain. Perhaps the olives, almonds and rosemary had something to do with it. Stewart clearly has found contentment in his good place among a lovingly described collection of local farmers, New Age travelers, artists and the occasional Buddhist. His hilly farm is a harsher place than Peter Mayle's Provence or Frances Mayes's Tuscany, and the local cuisine far less appetizing, yet his unfailing good humor and invincible optimism carry him past obstacles that would send most readers scurrying for home. More than a travel book, this is a record of Stewart's slowly flourishing friendship with his neighbor, Domingo, and of how Stewart gradually sank roots deep into his beautiful Andalusian hillside. A bestseller in England, this enchanting memoir is likely to prove popular in North America with both armchair travelers and readers who, while curious about the odd life choices others make, would just as soon give scorpions and clouds of flies a miss. (May) Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Funniest book I've read in a while! I mean, there were several points in the book when I was screaming with laughter and had tears running down my face! The book makes me just want to shop around for a foreign experience myself in a few years! Foreign travel and living, can be very eye opening, educational and needs to be approached with a very, very good sense of humor! Chris

Stewart's book was a blast!

Witty, self-deprecating, insightful. This is more than the formulaic move-to-a-foreign-country-rebuild-a-farmhouse-and-deal-with-wacky-local-tradesmen book. It contains a bracing dose of humor, of course (ever contemplated taking a shower in a shower stall shared by a dead goat?) but also poignant glimpses of farm life as it is lived in the Spanish hinterlands. Gritty...hard-scrabble...rustic. Also lyrical, contemplative and compassionate. I would recount passages to my wife as I was reading the book, and a day or two later, she would ask me "So what happens next with that English couple that moved to the farm in Spain?" The fact that my wife wanted to know "what happens next?" is a compliment to the book: like a delicious meal, it's nourishing by itself...but even more enjoyable when shared with someone you love.

I really enjoyed this personal chronicle of a couple (and daughter) who committed to farm life in Andalucia on its own terms. Lots of laughs and insights and beautiful descriptions of the mountains and terrain, including the challenges of surviving in this area a ways from Granada. I picked it up because of plans to visit the region, and it drew me in to the warmth and humanity of everyone Chris encountered, including the other ex-pats. Full of practical life issues, humor, and reflective commentary.

I liked this one a lot. It's a personal travelog like "Under the Tuscan Sun" with lots of unusual humor along with episodic catastrophes.

Lovely story about a couple who leave their comfortable life in the UK to renovate and run a farm in a remote area of Spain. The change is pretty drastic and they really do start with nothing facing a huge amount of work but this story is told with humour which lightens the tone. The story is beautifully told and I found myself getting to know the local characters and being lulled by the lifestyle. It's easy to understand why Nick and Ana took on this huge undertaking because by the end of the book the reader almost loves the farm and the area as much as they do. A story about following a dream and how all the hard work makes it worthwhile.

Definitely a 5 star read in my opinion. Having moved to inland Spain a few years ago I can identify with Chris Stewart's experiences which clearly happened quite a few years before we got here, although nothing has changed that much! He writes in a style that keeps me eager to read more. I

haven't finished the book yet - I don't have much time to read - but from what I have read so far I can thoroughly recommend this book to anyone who has any inkling of living in rural Spain, knows someone who moved to Spain, or is just happy to absorb the humour, oddities and quirks of the people and terrain, and animals, come to that! I am looking forward to reading the other two books in the trilogy. The book is brilliant, funny and human.

This was a fabulous read about lifestyle I had never even thought about. There's great imagery to paint the scenes, and I can see the mountains of Andalusia during the entire book. The writing is witty and engaging: there's just enough ridiculousness to keep the pages turning, while also convincing me that every single word is true.

I enjoyed this book immensely. I believe it is now well known, but I only discovered it recently by chance. It describes a personal account of the author's introduction to Spain and, in particular, life in Andalusia; told frankly and, at times, quite movingly. As a mere and passive reader I felt always that I was being spoken to directly. I thoroughly enjoyed reading about the challenges faced by the author and his wife and how they were largely overcome, and I particularly enjoyed the postscript section where again I felt I was being confided in as the author updated the reader and spoke also about the approach he took in writing the book. The locals were quite lovingly portrayed almost unflinchingly, even though not always as welcoming as they might have been. For me a most enjoyable read.

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