

Little Paris Bookcase

Sometimes when I am asked why I chose to be an au pair in Paris I am utterly silenced. I sit there and I think to myself, I am not sure, I guess I just loved the idea of Paris. Reflecting back now, it is no wonder why I chose Paris. I have a shelf on my bookcase dedicated to books on Paris. From my very first book of the collection, *Mad About Madeline*¹, to the books I purchased while sitting in Shakespeare and Co. while living in this beloved city, it was simply fate or perhaps destiny that landed me in Paris.

From a young age I have always known that I was a traveler. I may not have had the opportunity to go to foreign countries, but I had my books and the books I would “borrow”/steal from my moms’ bookshelf. And for a long time that was enough, and in some ways today especially during a pandemic it is enough. The very first places I wanted to visit were not real places, but inventive magical places from young childhood stories. As I grew older and began to fall in love with historical fiction the places became real. However, Paris never fully was real, there was always a speck of mythical whimsy to it that has kept me fascinated with the city. Every time I pick up a book on Paris it is as if my adult reality and my childhood fantasy are united. To me that is what makes a great book, being able to feel connected and yet longing for the unknown. And so, as I went through my formative teenage years I began to read as many books as possible about Paris.

¹ Bemelmans, *Mad About Madeline*

Now I have only been able to purchase a few of my favorites about Paris due to space and money, but the ones I have added to my collection each mean a great deal. However, I would like to highlight a couple of my favorite collection pieces that have contributed the most to my experience. One of my absolute favorite books is *The Little Paris Book Shop*² by Nina George. It was gifted to me by my mom when I was a senior in high school. I think it deserves a majority of the credit for why I chose to become an au pair in Paris. The story follows a barge book shop owner who uses books to help cure the woes of his customers. This book means a lot to me because it captures the whims of the people of everyday Paris and the love for books that I share. When I used to walk the banks of the Seine and see the Bouquinistes I remembered curling up with *The Little Paris Bookshop*¹ dreaming of being in the city I was now walking.

Sitting next to *The Little Paris Bookshop*² is *The Elegance of the Hedgehog*³ and *All the Light We Cannot See*⁴. This pair was bought in my favorite bookshop in Paris, Shakespeare and Co. I confess it is quite the tourist trap during the summer months but during the dark rainy winter months it is the perfect spot to curl up with the store cat Aggie. These two books mean so much because they got me through the first dark couple of months I spent in Paris feeling rather lonely. Imagine going to the place you have read so much about and feeling utterly defeated. These two books brought back the light and depth of Paris that I was missing. While retracing the steps of the characters in both of these novels I was able to find my ground and place among the vast streets and buildings. *The Elegance of the Hedgehog*³ made me laugh at

² George, *The Little Paris Bookshop*

³ Muriel, *The Elegance of the Hedgehog*

⁴ Doerr, *All the Light We Cannot See*

the absurdity of people and *All the Light We Cannot See*⁴ pushed me to imagine navigating Paris blind through war and the resilience of people just trying to survive. There were times when I rather felt like a character in one of my novels about Paris. Perhaps this line between reality and fiction is what makes life so charming in Paris.

The arguably largest item of my collection is my Jennifer Maravillas *Paris*⁵ contemporary watercolor map of Paris. I specifically remember the day I bought it at the Centre De Pompidou art shop with the intention of adding it next to my bookcase. It was the only large piece of art I have in my collection besides my collection of art postcards from Paris museums. Additionally, there are a few books in my collection that are not novels but that helped me survive my time abroad or remind me of my favorite place. While in Giverny I purchased *Monet at Giverny*⁶ because I wanted a book for my collection that was filled with photographs. I still prefer my collection to be filled with novels to inspire the imagination but looking at *Monet at Giverny*⁵ and *Paris*⁴ give me a sense of setting as I cozy up next to my French filled bookcase and yet again dive into the magical stories of a charmed city. Furthermore, *Knope Guides of Paris*⁷ and Rick Steve's guide to *France 2018*⁸ became my best friends whenever I was lost, and I still regard them as my best tools to plan a trip to my favorite city. Finally, Rachel Khoo's cookbook titled *The Little Paris Kitchen* completes the full whimsical image of Paris on my bookcase. One must eat a great French meal before tucking into another snug Parisian novel.

⁴ Doerr, *All the Light We Cannot See*

⁵ Marvailas, *Paris*

⁶ Goetz and Sander, *Monet at Giverny*

⁷ Knope, *Paris*

⁸ Steves, *France*

I might have quite the shelf collection of Paris books, but there are a few that I would like to add including *In Five Years*⁹, *Time Was Soft There*¹⁰, *The Paris wife*¹¹, and *Paris to the Moon*¹². It would be an honor to dive once more back into the city I love and capture the quaintness that my heart needs during a Pandemic. I hope to live in Paris again one day, but until then back to my reading I shall go.

⁹ Serle, *In Five Years*

¹⁰ Mercer, *Time Was Soft There*

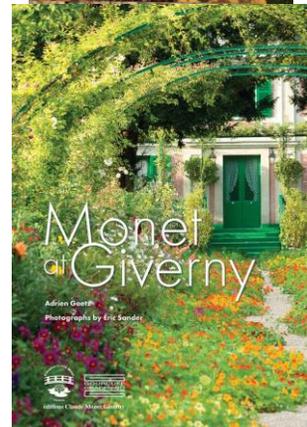
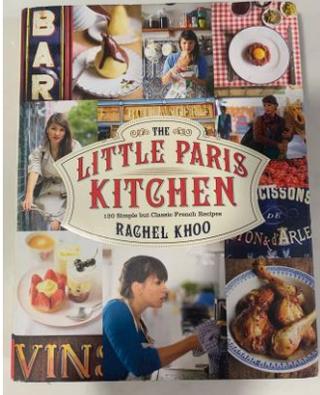
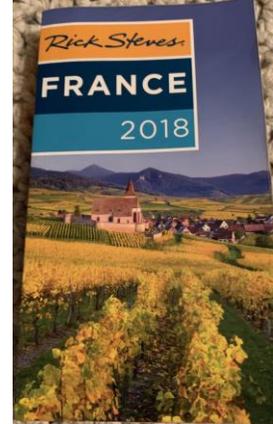
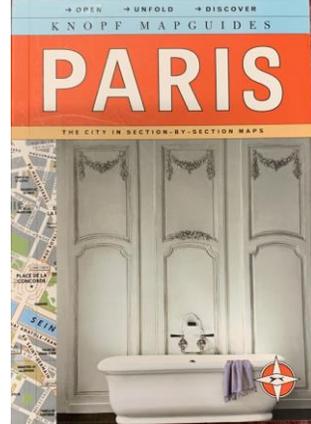
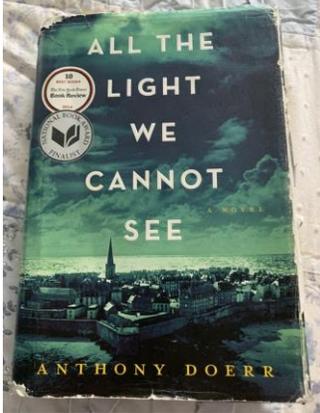
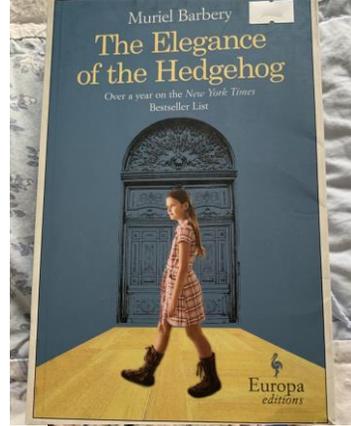
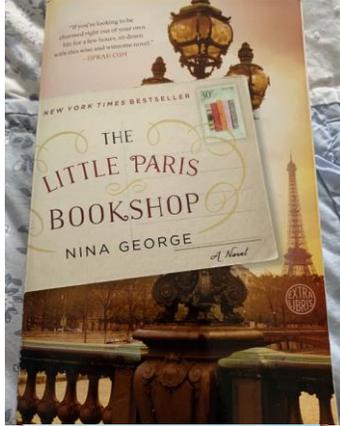
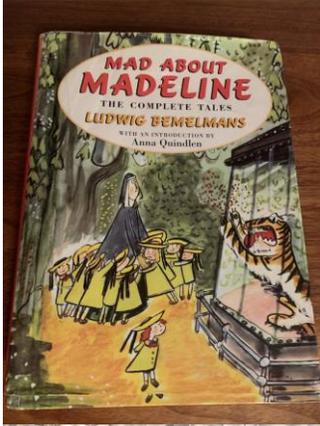
¹¹ MacLain, *The Paris Wife*

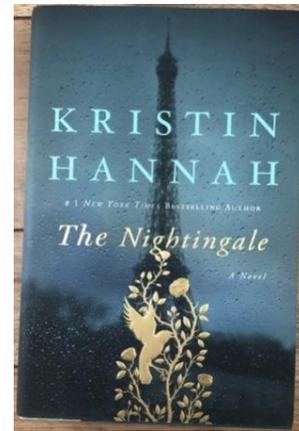
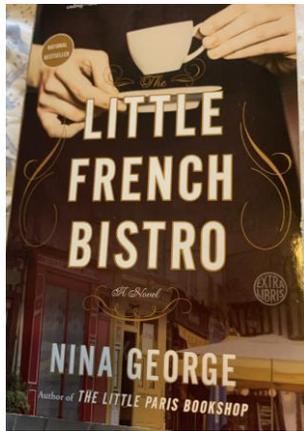
¹² Gopnik, *Paris to the Moon*

Works Cited

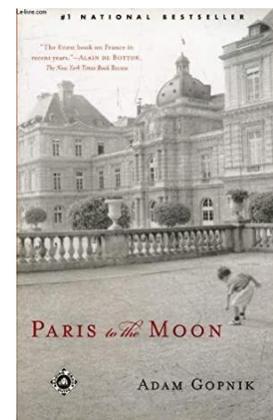
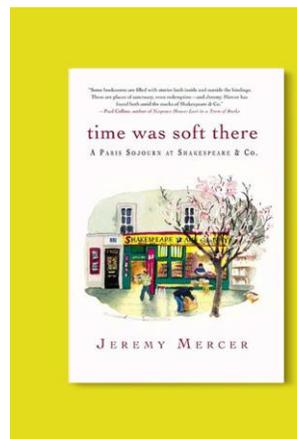
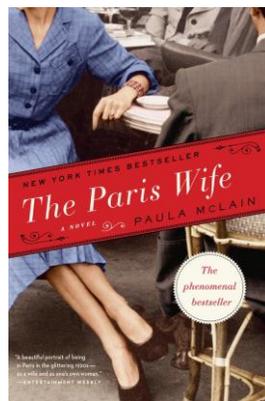
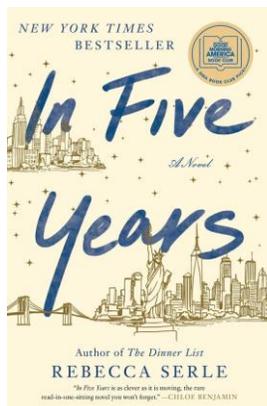
- Barbery, Muriel (., and Alison Anderson. *The Elegance of the Hedgehog*. New York: Europa, 2008.
- Bemelmans, Ludwig. *Mad about Madeline: the Collected Tales*. New York, N.Y, U.S.A. : Viking, 1993.
- Doerr, Anthony. *All the Light We Cannot See*. New York: Scribner, 2014.
- George, Nina. *The Little Paris Bookshop: a Novel*. New York, NY: Broadway Books, 2015.
- Goetz, Adrien, and Eric Sander. *Monet at Giverny*. Gourcuff Gradenigo, 2015.
- Gopnik, Adam. *Paris to the Moon*. Hardcoverd. New York, NY: Random House, 2001.
- Guides, Knopf. *Knopf Mapguide: Paris*. Alfred A Knopf, 2006.
- MacLain, Paula. *The Paris Wife*. London: Virago, 2012.
- Maravillas, Jennifer. "Paris." Watercolor map of Paris. Magma, n.d.
- Mercer, Jeremy. *Time Was Soft There: a Paris Sojourn at Shakespeare & Co*. New York: Picador, 2006.
- Serle, Rebecca. *In Five Years*. London: Quercus Publishing, 2020.
- Steves, Rick. *Rick Steves France 2018*. Berkeley, CA: Avalon Travel, 2018.

My Collection





My Wish List



Annotated Bibliography

1. Barbery, Muriel (., and Alison Anderson. *The Elegance of the Hedgehog*. New York: Europa, 2008.

This novel truly captures a whimsical french experience and was on of the first book I collected while in Paris.

2. Bemelmans, Ludwig. *Mad about Madeline: the Collected Tales*. New York, N.Y, U.S.A. : Viking, 1993.

The first book of my collection Mad About Madeline was my first taste of Paris life. I would read this before bedtime with my parents and treasure the memories that come with it. I see it as the first step towards my journey to Paris.

3. Clautrier, Adrien, and Henry Rowe. *Dirty French: Everyday Slang from "What's up?" to "F*%# off!"*. United States: Ulysses Press, 2009.

One can navigate Paris with very little french but knowing the everyday slang of French enriches my own reading as well as speech. Humorous and useful this book earns a spot on the shelf.

4. Doerr, Anthony. *All the Light We Cannot See*. New York: Scribner, 2014.

This book was also read abroad in Paris for me. It follows the resilience of a blind girl during World War Two. While it might not be the happiest of reads it shows how darkness can be found even in the darkest of times.

5. George, Nina, Simon Pare, and Nina George. *The Little French Bistro: a Novel*. New York: Broadway Books, 2018.

Another Nina George novel the Little French Bistro is what I would call a second to the Little Paris Bookshop. This fun light novel reaches beyond the borders of Paris to Normandy where Parisian culture mixes with the countryside.

6. George, Nina. *The Little Paris Bookshop: a Novel*. New York, NY: Broadway Books, 2015.

This novel adds to the collection by creating the foundations for why I collect books, borrow them to people, and find value in them. This novel captures the essence of why I have so many books on Paris.

7. Goetz, Adrien, and Eric Sander. *Monet at Giverny*. Gourcuff Gradenigo, 2015.

I like this book in my collection because much of the books are novels but this is a non-fiction book filled with photography from Giverny. Much of Monet's art is in Paris and this book helps illustrate the beauty and inspiration behind the city.

8. Guides, Knopf. *Knopf Mapguide: Paris*. Alfred A Knopf, 2006.

This unfoldable map book is essential to the collection as it clearly outlines the best places to visit in the city, how to get around, and the hidden nooks that make Paris what it is inside my other novels. I like to pull this out and show people where some of the books settings took place.

9. Hannah, Kristin. *The Nightingale*. Pan Books Ltd, 2019.

This book along with *All The Light We Cannot See* started my fascination with women in France during World War 2. I have discovered there are many stories to be told through historical fiction and the empowerment of women in this story is remarkable.

10. Khoo, Rachel, and David Loftus. *The Little Paris Kitchen: 120 Simple but Classic French Recipes*. San Francisco, CA: Chronicle Books, 2012.

Paris is known for its wonderful restaurants and Rachel Khoo shows the reader how to capture the taste of Paris within one's own kitchen. I like this book in the collection because it is the only book that talks about this aspect of Parisian culture.

11. Maravillas, Jennifer. "Paris." Watercolor map of Paris, n.d.

This beautiful piece of artwork captures the mystery of Paris through the use of vibrant colors and detailed illustrations. While it is not a book it still holds some of the same qualities that my novels do.

12. Steves, Rick. *Rick Steves France 2018*. Berkeley, CA: Avalon Travel, 2018.

I would go so far as to say this book is the bible of France. One cannot travel to France without knowing the tips and tricks of Rick Steves. Often this book is not on my bookshelf because I lend it to fellow travel lovers who are going abroad. Amongst my dreamy novels, Rick Steves manages to find wonder in the everyday goings of a bustling city.

1. .Gopnik, Adam. *Paris to the Moon*. Hardcoverd. New York, NY: Random House, 2001.

I believe this would add to my collection because it reflects much of the experiences I went through when I left my life in the United States and moved to Paris. I think it would give a modern real-life story approach to what Paris is really like.

2. MacLain, Paula. *The Paris Wife*. London: Virago, 2012.

This novel follows Hadley Richardson one of the wives of Ernest Hemingway. This historical fiction novel would pair well with *The Nightingale* and *All The Light We Cannot See*.

3. Mercer, Jeremy. *Time Was Soft There: a Paris Sojourn at Shakespeare & Co*. New York: Picador, 2006.

This book talks about Shakespeare and Co. and the history behind the famous bookstore. I would like to add this to my collection as some books from my collection were bought there among the many more I read whilst in the shop. If one wants to find an English bookstore that caters to Paris lovers Shakespeare and Co. is it.

4. Serle, Rebecca. *In Five Years*. London: Quercus Publishing, 2020.

Everyone needs a love story and that is what is missing from my collection. I think *In Five Years* would fill this gap. The city itself is romantic but love is no doubt in the air.