



All Good Things: From Paris to Tahiti: Life and Longing

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In this lushly written follow-up to *Almost French*, Sarah Turnbull explores a new paradise: Tahiti.

Having shared her story in her bestselling memoir, *Almost French*, Australian writer Sarah Turnbull seemed to have had more than her fair share of dreams come true. While Sarah went on to carve out an idyllic life in Paris with her husband, Frederic, there was still one dream she was beginning to fear might be impossible—starting a family. Then out of the blue an opportunity to embark on another adventure offered a new beginning—and new hope. Leaving behind life in the world’s most romantic and beautiful city was never going to be easy. But it helps when your destination is another paradise on earth: Tahiti.

All Good Things: From Paris to Tahiti: Life and Longing Details

Date : Published September 12th 2013 by Avery (first published May 1st 2013)

ISBN : 9781592408689

Author : Sarah Turnbull

Format : Hardcover 336 pages

Genre : Travel, Autobiography, Memoir, Nonfiction, Biography

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Doody Richards says

Unlike her previous 'Almost French', Turnbull takes us to her much more 'intimate' personal life about living in a little island; beautifully narrated. As life goes on a little island, the story is rather relaxing, a bit lazy, and flat. For me the most boring bit is talking about an effort to get a baby. I should have skipped that part.

Sarah says

I read this because I so enjoyed Sarah Turnbull's book *Almost French: Love and a New Life in Paris*. This wasn't as interesting because tropical paradises have never held allure for me--I hate heat, for one thing, and I love living in cities where everything is within walking distance. When Sarah is gearing up for the family's departure from Tahiti, she says, "I grew impatient to get back to the world of public libraries and art exhibitions, of old friends and cinemas, footpaths, parks and cafes" (p. 259). Exactly.

However, it was enjoyable to catch up with Sarah and her husband Frederic and their dog Mads, and to become acquainted with Oliver, (view spoiler)

Lauri says

I enjoyed this book, but not nearly as much as Sarah Turnbull's first one. After over ten years in Paris, Sarah and Frederic move to Tahiti, where his company has opened an office; as Frederic heads to the office on the ferry each day, Sarah has plans to work on her novel. I loved the descriptions of the islands/atolls and the sometimes confusing interactions with the native Tahitians; it was eye-opening to think of living in the South Pacific, which most of us associate with paradise, as an isolating experience. However, much of Sarah's focus, during their time in Tahiti as well as throughout much of the book, is on the couple's struggles with unwanted childlessness and infertility. In fact, the book is as much an introspective as it is a travel memoir. Readers should be aware of this, since I was somewhat unprepared for it. Overall, the book doesn't have the humor or charm of the first one, despite Sarah's enjoyable writing style and her cross-cultural insights.

Erika Daniels says

This book was mildly enjoyable but did not hold my interest throughout. Usually I enjoy memoirs--especially ones that take the writer to various parts of the globe. With *All Good Things*, though, I couldn't figure out what point Sarah Turnbull was trying to make. The historical information about and physical descriptions of Tahiti were interesting but dragged on a little too long. Her struggles with infertility were poignant, but it seemed like she was trying too hard to be existential in her descriptions of the emotional journey. All told, I didn't dislike the book so much as I just couldn't find much in it with which to engage.

Sarah says

What a disappointment after *Almost French*. This is not a travel book, it's an infertility book. The details on Tahiti were rather lacking, and the book was mostly about her struggle to get pregnant. Not a topic I'm particularly interested in or can relate to. I struggled to finish it.

It's also not very well written. Lots of repeated details and several repeated anecdotes.

Liralen says

In *Almost French*, Turnbull described a change in pace from Australia to France; here, she describes another change in pace, this time to Tahiti, where she and her (French) husband temporarily relocated. Much of Turnbull's experience had to do with the fact that she was struggling with infertility. She wanted to write a novel and she wanted to have a baby, and neither was proving easy.

It's a pretty quiet book, this one. Setting aside a few external trials and tribulations, most of the tension is internal; even when it comes to infertility, it's less a question of *can I get pregnant here* (they were viewing Tahiti largely as a break from trying) and more a question of *how do I deal if I can't*. I read the book for the travel aspect, but...how do I put this? As somebody who doesn't have much interest in either pregnancy or island life, this wasn't a great fit for me.

Turnbull ultimately, in this book, gets some of what she wants. There's quite a lot in here that she certainly never planned or expected to be part of the story, and I wonder whether she wrestled with where to end the book. Do you end in Tahiti, when things are going so well? Do you skip the trauma that comes late, late in the book? Do you write about driving around Australia? (In case you're wondering, her answers were no, no, and sort of.) I wonder if there is another memoir yet to come from Turnbull.

Randee says

I read Ms. Turnbull's memoir "*Almost French*" several years ago and loved it. Her life in Paris after moving from her home country of Australia read like a particularly interesting combination of diary/travelogue. My copy actually is in a bookcase of my very favorite books. So, I was delighted to find another book recounting her move from Paris to Tahiti. I didn't find it as interesting and this might be for several reasons. To be fair, Paris is more interesting than Tahiti to me. But, I believe the bigger reason I found this less interesting is that a major portion of the book is about her and her husband's efforts to conceive a child. If I had known this, I might not have read it. Having children holds no interest for me and I felt disappointed in that I felt this was almost a misrepresentation of the core topic, especially since her first book was about her love affair with the city of Paris. I like travel writing and expected this to be more along those lines.

Steph says

This was not what I expected. *Almost French* was so good. This one was more about her wanting a baby and her fertility issues. I found it a bit tedious.

Jenny Esots says

All Good Things

Another book that reflects on the microcosm of living on an island (have just read *The Light Between Oceans*). The author reflects on Tahiti and Australia as islands and is able to incorporate research without it being an onerous task for the reader.

But also the comparison to France, which looms large, as they emigrate from their home in France. Well this is her adopted home, having a French husband 'Freddie'.

This searching for a place to call home surfaces throughout.

It seems that she is in the fortunate position of having a partner with a well-paying job (lawyer). Which gives her a ticket to Tahiti and time to write.

France is where he doesn't have to explain himself, to use my friend's expression. Australia is that place for me. P. 314.

It is about finding a sense of place, which turns out is a nebulous concept. As the sense of place adapts. Australia, France, Tahiti, Australia.

The author relates 'Yet Australia is where I grew up, mostly; here my nationality is of no interest to anyone. Of all the places in the world it is where I stand out the least'.

The book focuses on the wanting to have a child and the perils of having IVF.

The raising and dashing of hopes.

The lighting of prayer candles, despite being agnostic/ambivalent? Or having a bet each way.

Being drawn to the Notre Dame des Victories.

This is a very successful memoir. It equates to a wander along beside someone who writes of their trauma and triumphs so well. You can see yourself on in the waters of Tahiti as you contemplate a dive. Or the streets of Sydney, finding the IVF clinic.

So the topics centre on; Fertility, country, home, sense of place, Tahiti's heritage, motherhood.

The stories open up, but to quote the author 'Miracles do happen'. P 28.

Danfam says

Dull & boring. She has a very lucky life to be able to not work bc her husband can afford it & living in great places but this book with all the blah blah blah about not having a child & then all the blah blah blah about ivf, doctors, appointment, & endless descriptions about pregnancy birth & the child is so boring. I'd rather have read a pregnancy book if I wanted to hear all about that. I loved reading her first book & so this was terribly disappointing.

Michelle says

I really enjoyed Turnbull's memoir, *Almost French*, about living in Paris and was looking forward to catching up with her. Unfortunately, this memoir of her moving to Tahiti with her husband didn't hold my attention very well. Guess Tahiti isn't the place for me.

Helen King says

Lovely book - a gentle journey to a new country, a new life, and attempts to realise a dream of the couple (which I won't give away). The descriptions of the local area, the swimming, the interactions, the challenges with shared aspirations that are not coming to fruition - all are treated beautifully.

Just finished, and loved the final notes, but wanted to capture these two descriptions. This first, from Tahitian life, because I have never heard this feeling of emotional flatness described in this way:

'J'tait fiu': the last word, 'fiu', was Tahitian. Pronounced 'phew', everyone on these islands knew exactly what it means. She was fed up / over it / over everything. What had caused Nelly to feel this way she didn't say: there could be one reason or many or none easily identifiable. The expression refers to a state of mind that might account for a for a decision to spend the day in bed or to walk out on a husband or wife or simply disappear for a while, perhaps to an outer island to stay with relatives. A local psychiatrist who studies the condition likened it to depression. Importantly, instead of denying it or maintaining appearances, Polynesians allow themselves to succumb to it. Just like the wet season rains, feeling fiu is considered a normal part of the life cycle and it is understood it will pass eventually.'

And the second? 'What made me leave Australia in my mid twenties was a desire to be pulled out of my comfort zone, exposed to something exciting and new. In a foreign culture daily life retains a frisson of novelty...Now at forty, I longed for the intimacy of old friendships. I wanted to put down roots ... An Australian friend who lived for years in London put it this way in an email: 'Sooner or later we yearn for the one place we don't need to constantly explain ourselves'.

Bookish says

#LitWorld2018GB - French Polynesia /Tahiti

Across continents and the South Pacific... It's been a fantastic eye-opener to worlds beyond land

Darlene says

This was not a bad read. Different from what I usually read. At times it did not hold my interest, but I kept reading it because I wanted to finish it to see how it ended. Not reading the first one by this author, perhaps I missed some of the story that followed into this one. I do find that authors from other countries, such as England, Ireland, they don't hold my interest in how they write. I have read other books and felt the same way as I did about this one. The story was good. The writer told about the lives of a couple that meet, married and lived in Paris. Then moved to Tahiti because of the husband's job. She was a writer and thought she could finish her book there. Also, they were trying to have a baby and had undergone numerous IVF treatments through the years and then just when they gave up hope, she ended up pregnant. That was a happy part of the story and I myself, if writing a memoir, probably would have spent more time writing about the ups and downs of what they went through and how it may have affected the marriage. I did feel that some pieces in the book probably could have been left out. I could relate to the mother when her son had hurt himself and she was trying to do everything she thought was right. For I have faced something like that

myself and for most women, their mother instincts kick in even if they never had them before. You could feel the hurt she experienced and the guilt as well. I was glad that the father did not blame the mother for what happened. I did think that they might stay in Tahiti when his job fell through that took them to Australia, but they went ahead and left and decided to tour around Australia before settling in to a normal life again. Maybe I will read the first book and it may give me a better understanding of this one. Like I said, this wasn't a bad read, just not what I am used to.

Luna Blue says

After 'Almost French' I waited years and years for Sarah's next book. But I guess after writing Almost French so brilliantly, the second book was bound to disappoint.

Even so, I would will always purchase any book written by Sarah, just because of how much I loved Almost French.

Her descriptions of life in Tahiti are exceptional, you can smell the flowers, the beach as you read. You can feel the night air on your skin. I just found the story line revolving around her trying to get pregnant tedious. I would have preferred a novel about life in Tahiti not a novel about infertility, set in Tahiti.

However I would say, give this Author a go, if you haven't already. At the very least, by the end of it, you could say you have been to Tahiti.
