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Seasons In Basilicata: A Year In A Southern Italian Hill Village



Synopsis

Award-winning travel writer and illustrator, David Yeadon embarks with his wife, Anne on an exploration of the "lost word" of Basilicata, in the arch of Italy's boot. What is intended as a brief sojourn turns into an intriguing residency in the ancient hill village of Aliano, where Carlo Levi, author of the world-renowned memoir *Christ Stopped at Eboli*, was imprisoned by Mussolini for anti-Fascist activities. As the Yeadons become immersed in Aliano's rich tapestry of people, traditions, and festivals, reveling in the rituals and rhythms of the grape and olive harvests, the culinary delights, and other peculiarities of place, they discover that much of the pagan strangeness that Carlo Levi and other notable authors revealed still lurks beneath the beguiling surface of Basilicata.

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Customer Reviews

Intrigued by Carlo Levi's book on life in the Italian province of Basilicata, *Christ Stopped at Eboli*, the author and his wife, Anne, decided to live for a year in Aliano, the village where Levi was kept under house arrest by Mussolini for seven months in 1935-1936. In Levi's day, Basilicata, situated in the instep of Italy's "boot," was a place of poverty. Unlike Levi, however, British travel writer Yeadon (*The World's Secret Places*) was there to "live happily with Anne, learning, and generally have a spanking good time dining on all those gorgeous porky products and homemade olive oil and wines and wild game and pasta galore." In his entertaining book, he describes how he did just that, renting an apartment with a terrace overlooking the village square, making friends who enjoyed serving him sumptuous meals, learning how wine and olive oil are made and investigating

the local superstitions. He tries to find out from the older inhabitants what life was like in the 1930s, but they are reluctant to talk about it, claiming that they are better off than they were. But Yeadon doesn't dig too deeply: finding it hard to reconcile his experiences with Levi's bleak portrayal of conditions in Basilicata, Yeadon concentrates instead on the comradeship and good food. Illus. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

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After his exile in southern Italy for anti-Fascist activities during World War II, Carlo Levi wrote *Christ Stopped at Eboli*, in which he explores the "dark, ancient, and richly human ethos" of the south's Basilicata region. More than a half century later, summoned by the "siren calls" in Levi's masterwork, Yeadon, with his wife, retreated to Aliano, a tiny village tucked within Basilicata's remote, snowcapped peaks and the site of Levi's imprisonment. There, in a community dating back to at least the sixth century B.C.E., they found winding streets and a wonderfully eccentric populace, including Pietro, the town's geriatric parking attendant, and Viva, a spirited breakfast hostess, who, like many Italians, seemed to have "an inbred natural ability to express all [her] emotions instantaneously." Also evident was an ancient, underlining fascination with the occult, with frequent whispers of werewolves, sorcerers, and death curses. Yeadon's focus on the Aliano people gives this funny, surprising story its lifeblood, as does his avoidance of cliches. His illustrations are a nice touch, too. Andy Boynton Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I read the beautiful work of Carlo Levi years ago "Christ Stopped at Eboli" and have been hungry ever since for more about this fascinating region- the home of my grandfather. So I read this book with relish as a source about the culture of the region. Travel resources are hard to come by, and don't seem to exist in the common "lonely planet" type format. Given this scarcity, the book is a great source and Yeadon clearly has an affectionate love for the people and the region. As others have aptly noted, the editing staff must have been on sabbatical too. If you like Yeadon's sense of humor you may be as tickled by his inner and outer ramblings as he is himself. If not, you may find yourself mining the pages for wonderful stories and descriptions about food, traditions, culture, people, the Italian bureaucracy. Perhaps the kind of stories you loved to hear your elders tell about the old country and all the endearing ironies of their beliefs and traditions. Some are here- he is a good story teller. As are vivid descriptions about food, people, places. Just be prepared to wade through a great deal of time spent focused on Yeadon himself, which for me was not interesting and

took away from the main subject. It's a shame because better editing could have made the personal aspects of this piece more easily appreciated. Again- given the dearth of English writing (memoir or travel guide) on this region, I enjoyed the experiences through each season and what it means to live close to this land. I was able to certainly take a lot of notes on places I would like to see (and eat !). It was helpful to read about this region during the last 10 years. I have a somewhat richer context for understanding my own relatives and cultural traditions and I can't wait to go to the source myself next month ! Last word- do yourself a great favor and read Carlo Levi if you are interested in this region. He seems to have been a fascinating, sensitive and courageous man, a gifted writer. Given the time period where he was confined to Aliano it is a treasured resource for the life and times of those who immigrated from the region during the first part of the century.

I have this book in hardcover and loved it so much that I got it for my Kindle. Basilicata is a fascinating area of Italy and David Yeadon has captured its uniqueness. He takes a rather remote part of Basilicata and brings it to life for the reader. It is an in depth chronicle of the people, food and way of life of his chosen town and it makes the reader wish for more. I have read many travel books, and this is by far the best.

There wasn't enough about the area/history of Basilicata....tooo much about the author and his life. He detailed much about the town of "Aliano" and its people. The parts of Basilicata he did cover were interesting. My family came from and I spent some time in Basilicata many years ago, but could not relate to his relationships there.

Describes a part of Italy many tourists never think about.

Wonderful descriptions of the people and food of Basilicata!! Great story of the author and his wife living in an Italian hill town for a year.

Good book! Quite entertaining, but I guess it's only for those that have read and thoroughly enjoyed Carlo Levi's masterpiece, Christ Stopped at Eboli. Having traveled through that country, Basilicata, also helps you in appreciating these memoirs.

I was interested in this book because the author proposed to make descriptive comparisons of the area in Italy where Carlo Levy was interned during WWII. Although the writing style was less than

engaging, I read every page looking for insights for a similar (but much shorter) trip. In Basilicata, I made mental comparisons of his descriptions with what I saw. Nothing seemed to match. Tonight I started a oil painting based on my photographs of Graco (an abandoned city high on a hill) the author had written about. That passage (two pages) intrigued me more than anything else in his book. This evening I turned to those pages (which included a quotation from another travel book about why the city had been abandoned and a sketch of the city on the hill). Finally, I understood. The author's drawing resembles the description he quoted, not the actual site. Perhaps, as a previous reviewer pointed out, the author didn't speak the language and didn't understand . . . perhaps he did spend time in Basilicata. I serious doubt he ever saw Graco. I'd encourage anyone who plans to go to Basilicata to disregard this book. Basilicata is a haunting beautiful place.

I had this book for a long time and have reread it often and purchased this copy for my son who also enjoys it. I feel I am travelling with the author, love his historical and geographic details and contcts with interesting people as well as enjoying interesting cooking details.

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