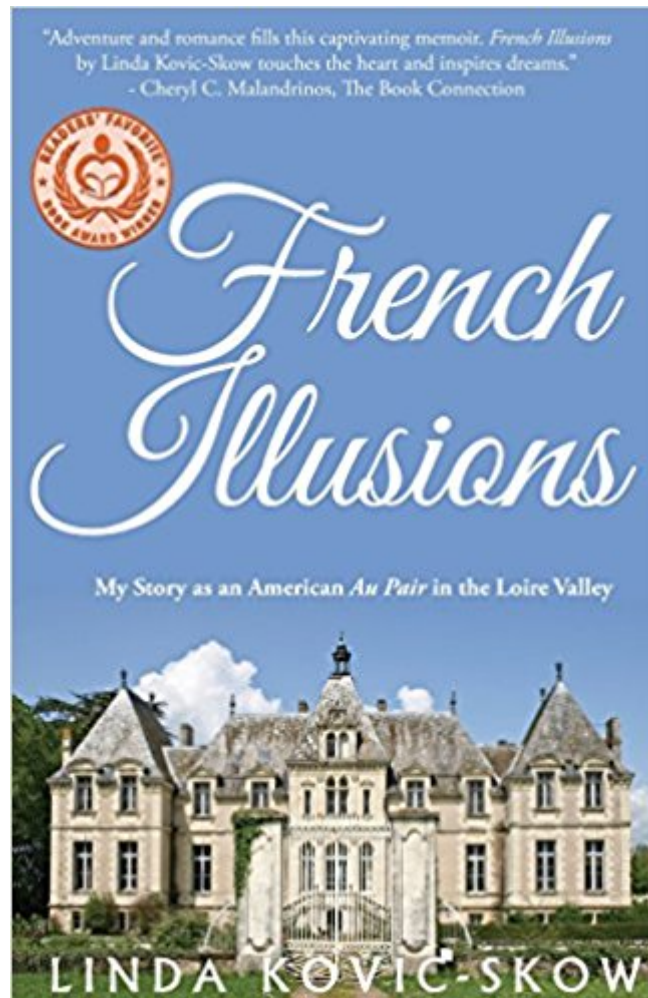




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# French Illusions: My Story As An American Au Pair In The Loire Valley



## Synopsis

Outstanding "Non-Fiction Travel" in the 2016 IAN Book of the Year Awards and a "Readers' Favorite" Award-Winning Memoir "This is an engaging read, all the more because it is true."

- Patricia Sands, award-winning author of *The Promise of Provence*. *French Illusions: My Story as an American Au Pair in the Loire Valley*, is the first of two books based on the author's diaries from 1979 and 1980. Linda needs to learn a language fast in order to fulfill her dream of becoming a flight attendant so she contracts to become an au pair for a wealthy family in the Loire Valley. To secure the nanny position, Linda lies and pretends to speak French, confident she will be forgiven once she arrives at her destination. This book captures her real-life story inside and outside the Chateau de Montclair, detailing Linda's challenges and triumphs as she tries to adjust to her new life with the hard-to-please Madame Dubois, her husband and their two incomprehensible children. When Linda attends language classes at a local university, she encounters, Adam, a handsome young student, and her life with the family becomes more complicated, adding fuel to her internal battle for independence. Pick up your copy now and join Linda on her adventure of discovery and romance in an extraordinary part of the world.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

**\*\*OUTSTANDING "NON-FICTION TRAVEL" in the 2016 IAN Book of the Year Awards\*\*\*\*BRONZE MEDAL WINNER in the Non-Fiction Travel Category in the 2014 Readers' Favorite Book Awards Contest\*\*** 

“Plenty of memoirs address traumatic cultural encounters; but this blend of adventure, romance, and a summer of discovery goes a step further in documenting the poor choices of youth, their consequences, and how Linda Kovic-Skow ultimately overcame many challenges to achieve her goals despite these early snafus. The result makes for an especially vivid, engrossing read.” -D. Donovan, Senior Reviewer, Midwest Book Review  
“The story is fast-paced, well-written and delivers an excellent look into the domestic life of this privileged family, as well as many of the cultural aspects of living in France.” -Patricia Sands, award-winning author of *The Promise of Provence*  
“The book (French Illusions: My Story as an American Au Pair in the Loire Valley) is an honest account of the author’s life and her dreams to travel the world. The book is insightful and it captures the beauty of the Loire Valley.” -Readers’ Favorite Book Review and Award Contest  
“Impeccably written and proffering a fascinating peek into an extraordinary life, *French Illusions* is a memoir par excellence and a notable debut from an author who deserves a place on your bookshelf. It is highly recommended.” -Book Viral

Linda Kovic-Skow resides in Kirkland, Washington. She earned an Associate Degree in Medical Assisting in 1978 from North Seattle Community College and a Bachelor of Arts in Business Administration from Seattle University in 1985. She has been married for 27 years and has two daughters. An enthusiastic traveler, Linda also enjoys boating, gardening and socializing with friends. *French Illusions*, her debut memoir, is the culmination of a three-year project. --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

Linda Kovic-Skow wants to be an international stewardess. One of the requirements of International airlines is that stewardesses must speak English and another language (Spanish, French or German). Not knowing a word of French, she decides to work an au-pair in France and learn French along the way. She ends up working as an au-pair for a wealthy French family (who lives in a castle) in the Loire Valley. However, she left out one minor detail on her au-pair application - she doesn't speak French. The French family aren't thrilled with news, but with no other au-pairs available, decide to hire her. The ending was rushed since she leaves the reader hanging, leaving unanswered questions about her romance with another student. To find out what happens, you need to buy her next book. Overall an entertaining read.

Linda goes to work as an au pair in France, lying about the fact that she cannot speak French. Her French "family" accepts this (rather important) shortcoming nonetheless, and Linda honestly try to overcome this by searching for decent French lessons. However, in a sense, the book should not rate 4 stars!! Linda misleads her employers by being unable to speak a word of French (2 small kids and a baby which arrives while she is in residence). So the attitude of the little elder daughter is understandable -- an au pair with whom she cannot easily communicate! Strangely enough, this clash between cultures is what makes one go on reading the book. On the one hand, an aristocratic, refined and wealthy French lady, and on the other hand our author, a rather typical touchy American woman of twenty-two. She has a certain sense of entitlement ... And it is this clash of cultures which makes the story interesting, although I doubt that the author saw it that way. Often when she describes what her employer and her attitude say, one gets the uncomfortable idea that she is exaggerating. After all, Madame of the chateau seems to do all the major cooking, and boy, can she cook, while Linda gives her no compliments for the many delicious meals. And life with two smallies and a baby is no joke. So, okay, she gives Linda too many chores (I have no idea what an au pair is supposed to do or not do). But I really felt that Linda was not totally honest about her employer's nastiness towards her. I might be wrong. After all, this story comes from the 70's. Purely subjective: I felt that if Linda approached her madame in a more humble manner (given that she mislead the family in her application and could not speak a word of French) she might have won her over. As it is, her sense of "entitlement" stays to the fore. So, a reluctant 4 stars, because I wanted to see how this culture clash would end and therefore found the story very interesting. Unfortunately, the end is a damp squid. No matter, Linda, I read on and on ... You're a good writer.

.I BECAME ENGROSSED IN THE BOOK IMMEDIATELY, HOWEVER IN AN ATTEMPT TO LOCATE WHERE THIS AU PAIR WAS REALLY LIVING AS I LIVED IN THE AREA SHE WAS LIVING FOR THREE YEARS, I CAME ACROSS A REVIEW WHICH WAS A SPOILER FOR ME. I HAVEN'T PICK UP THE BOOK SINCE. WINTER IS COMING AND I DO READ MORE. SADLY AS IT TURNS OUT THE CITIES, TOWNS AND THE FAMILY ARE ALL FICTIONAL WHICH ALSO TOOK AWAY A LOT FROM ME. I THINK THE AU PAIR IS TRYING TO PROTECT THIS FAMILY FROM ANY LOCAL GOSSIP OR FINGER POINTING.

I really enjoyed this book and was sorry to see it end. Linda was brave to apply for a job requiring proficiency in a language she did not know. She was gutsy to lie and say she spoke French. What if her employers spoke no English? Fortunately they did but the children in her care did not so this

was a very challenging job. Linda had a plan for her future career that required fluency so she was determined to learn French. Where better to do so than by living in France with a French family? I loved her independent spirit and endurance. Her adventures, her studies, her ability to make friends were enjoyable to read. I also admired that she had a goal and put up with a very nasty employer who treated her like a maid when her job title was Nanny. She did this without complaint until finally it became too much. Her adventures will continue in the next book. That's the only thing I didn't like. I wanted this book to go on and on. I took French in high school a very long time ago and that made this book all the more enjoyable with all the French expressions some of which I remembered.

I thoroughly enjoyed French Illusion : My Story as an American Au Pair in the Loire Valley. I found the book easy to read and written in a way that drew you in. I was kept engaged throughout with a nice balance of dialogue and narrative. The French conversation was also written in a way that was easy to understand and follow. Even though the story was about day to day life as an au pair I didn't find it at all boring but interesting. The challenges of living with a French family with high expectations and having Madame Dubious being so difficult to please gave some edge and tension to the story. I admired Linda's tenacity in staying as long as she did considering the circumstances and it was fortunate she did have some friends she had made which helped her isolation. An engaging read.

I enjoyed the memoir "French Illusions" immensely. I read it both as the Kindle version, and the also listened to the audio book. Linda Kovic- Skow tells with humour and a delightful writing style of her years as an au-pair girl with an aristocratic French family. Her hopes for an exciting adventure are squashed when she is faced with the reality of being at the merciless beck and call of her French host family. Of course, taking place in France, a romantic affair of the heart is thrown in. I couldn't put the book down in order to see if it all ended in tears or in a happy outcome for young Linda. I enjoyed revisiting the book with the audio vision that brought the story to life, and I was delighted to freshen up my French a bit at the same time.

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