

**The Devil Is White** by William Palmer, hardback, Jonathan Cape, £16.99 (ebook £9.49). The Devil Is White follows the lives of a group of abolitionists as they set out to build a free society on an African island.

In 1792, after recruiting more than 100 people to embark on a "utopia" experiment, a group of English gentlemen set about planning life in their new world, and it all seems to go well as they arrive at the verdant paradise.

However, paradise isn't handed to them on a silver platter, and there is dissension in the ranks when people have different views on how the settlement should be ruled – but greater adversaries await in the form of illness, starvation and inclement weather.

A master storyteller, Palmer exposes the dark and dangerous creases of the human mind in this accomplished novel.



★★★  
(Ben Major)

**The Baby Diaries** by Sam Binnie, paperback, Avon, £6.99 (ebook £2.99). Kiki and Thom are just married and in a drink-fuelled night on honeymoon decide they'll try for a baby. Guess what? Kiki gets pregnant and then has to come to terms with the changes to her life a new baby will bring. With a job she loves and plenty of friends in London, Kiki's quite happy with how things are. Luckily, her husband Thom is very supportive.

While The Baby Diaries is a fun read for those who are pregnant and can empathise with Kiki's situation, it borders on formulaic, because she's so upbeat throughout and any wobble is met by a huge cuddle from her near-perfect other half.



★★★  
(Kate Whiting)

**The Last Time I Saw You** by Eleanor Moran, paperback, Quercus, £7.99 (ebook £5.03). If you enjoy novels with unexpected endings, The Last Time I Saw You will be a rewarding choice – once the plot eventually begins to unravel. Livvy, the protagonist, is a breakaway from the classic 'main character' as the once-sidekick of typical queen bee Sally, which makes for a slightly warped look back at their friendship.

On discovering Sally has died in a car crash, years after their time at university together, Livvy sets off on a quest to uncover the truth. The story does have great potential; Livvy is thrust from plot point to plot point in a linear fashion that never really meets the expectations you long for, yet still handing you just enough to keep you craving conclusion. A pretty standard chick-lit with a twist.

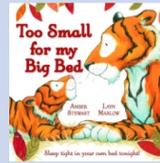


★★★  
(Emily Pawson)

**CHILDREN'S BOOK OF THE WEEK:**  
**Too Small For My Big Bed** by Amber Stewart, illustrated by Layn Marlow, hardback, Oxford University Press, £11.99. While reading a children's picture book, it's always a good sign when your eyes prick with tears.

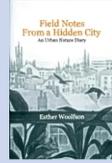
Too Small For My Big Bed tells the tale of a tiger cub called Piper who is brave during the daytime, when he's climbing and jumping, but finds it hard to sleep in his own bed at night-time.

With beautiful illustrations throughout by Layn Marlow, Amber Stewart's heart-warming tale will help toddlers – and big kids – get off to sleep.



★★★★  
(Kate Whiting)

**NON-FICTION**  
**Field Notes From A Hidden City: An Urban Nature Diary** by Esther Woolfson, hardback, Granta, £16.99 (ebook £9.78). Set against the backdrop of the bleak but captivating city of Aberdeen, Field Notes From A Hidden City is a beautiful and absorbing account of the natural world, as observed by Esther Woolfson, and revealed in diary form. Not only is the flora and fauna of the locality examined, but the role of the weather and geographical features, in shaping our relationship with the environment, are given due prominence. Knowledgeable and informative on squirrels, rats, pigeons and spiders, Woolfson brings the reader closer to nature.



★★★  
(Liz Ellis)

TOP EBOOKS

- 1 The Hundred-Year-Old Man Who Climbed Out Of The Window And Disappeared, Jonas Jonasson
  - 2 Life Of Pi, Yann Martel
  - 3 Safe House, Chris Ewan
  - 4 The Ninth Life Of Louis Drax by Liz Jensen
  - 5 Dark Winter, David Mark
  - 6 Thursdays In The Park, Hilary Boyd
  - 7 Little Girl Lost by Brian McGilloway
  - 8 The Half-Life Of Hannah, Nick Alexander
  - 9 War Brides by Helen Bryan
  - 10 Missing You, Louise Douglas
- (Compiled by the Kindle store at Amazon.co.uk)

# Story of our drive into the unknown

**A Notts couple, who quit their jobs to go travelling in a motorhome, have turned their experiences in Morocco into a book. They talk to LYNETTE PINCHESS about their African adventures, warts and all**

JULIE and Jason Buckley are seasoned travellers after more than 20,000 miles on the road.

But their arrival in Morocco came as a culture shock after months of touring across Europe.

As their motorhome trundled into territories unknown – at least to the Buckleys – there was an instant assault on their senses: loudspeakers bellowing calls to prayer, locals going about their daily duties in long robes and camels and goats grazing at the roadside.

It seemed a million miles away from their life in Eastwood, where both had had 9 to 5 jobs at E.ON before quitting to tour Europe.

Before arriving in Morocco, the Buckleys hadn't particularly stood out on their travels in their motorhome, nicknamed Dave.

But in Africa, they were very clearly in the minority and were attracting attention. Or at least their four-legged friend was. Pet dog Charlie has accompanied them every step of the way on their mammoth expedition.

Julie says: "Everyone was fascinated by Charlie. We think he may be the first King Charles cavalier to make it there. People stared, some pointed and the braver kids went for a leg grab or stroke."

Because their month-long stay in Morocco proved such an eye-opener, the couple, who both turned 40 during their 500 days on the road, thought it would be useful to turn their adventures into a warts and all book called A Monkey Ate My Breakfast.

The title comes from their encounter with the Barbary apes who live in the wild near their campsite.

Julie says: "The locals were feeding them small cakes in metallic wrappers. They were used to these as they carefully undid the wrapper, then peeled away the surrounding paper before eating the cake. They were all around us and we were desperate to feed them something, but didn't have



The couple at Moulay Idriss.

any cake – then I remembered I'd put a banana in my bag to have as breakfast on our walk to see the monkeys.

"We felt a bit bad stereotyping them with a banana, but they seemed to love it when Jason gave it to them."

The Buckleys have been on the road since resigning from their jobs and renting out their home in October 2011.

Their adventures have taken them to 14 countries in Europe including France, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Slovenia, Croatia and Austria but they never planned to visit another continent.

Only when the UK Government's

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs changed its pet passport rules did they decide to venture into Africa.

"Europe's a pretty big place to occupy us for a year or two. But the lure of adventure, the test of overcoming our own fears and the opportunity to go and see a Muslim African country for ourselves was too much to resist. We had to go," says Julie.

In the book they write about magnificent sights from the snow-clad Atlas mountains and Sahara Desert to bustling medieval souks at Fez and Marrakech.

It is, says Julie, the kind of world you daydream about on those dark, wet, winter mornings on your way to work.

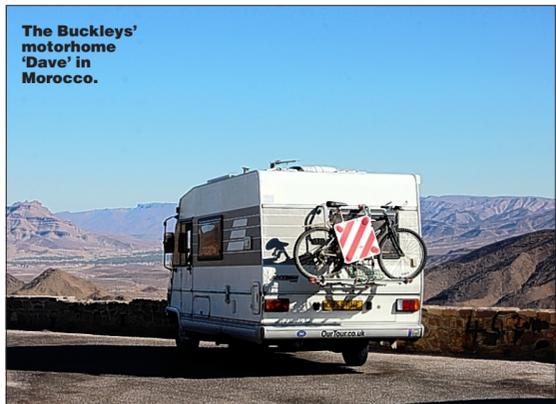
But there were less spectacular moments: finding a McDonalds was just too much like home. And Julie wasn't impressed when she witnessed a chicken being slaughtered at one of the busy marketplaces.

Julie recalls: "I saw its feet wiggle as it went into the plucking machine. Yuck!"

As tourists they had to keep their wits firmly about them, especially when it came to deterring locals who frequently flagged them down to sell their wares, usually chocolate.

"You're right there with us as we haggle with the locals, ride camels in the Sahara and learn to handle the celebrity status of being foreign," says Julie.

The downside was having to deal with persistent beggars, Charlie was attacked by a wild dog and they fell victim to a fake tour guide.



The Buckleys' motorhome 'Dave' in Morocco.



Julie and Jason Buckley on their Moroccan adventure and (below) with their dog Charlie.

Julie says: "We'd been warned by others about 'faux guides'. They approach you and offer to show you around, or invite you to meet their 'brother' in his cafe or shop, or ask if they can walk with you to practise their English – then at the end they demand payment.

"Our fella – his name was Idriss, although at first we doubted that as we were in a town called Moulay Idriss, but we refer to him as Arthur Daley as he wore a similar coat to him and was a bit of a chancer.

"We'd parked up in a car park and he had approached us and told us that he was the guardian – in car parks it's normal to pay the guardian a few Dirham to watch your vehicle for you.

"Jason opened his wallet and paid him, at which point Arthur caught sight of money in there and asked if we needed a guide. We declined but asked him to point us in the direction of the main part of the town. Big mistake. He pointed and told us he was going that way so we should walk with him – another big mistake."

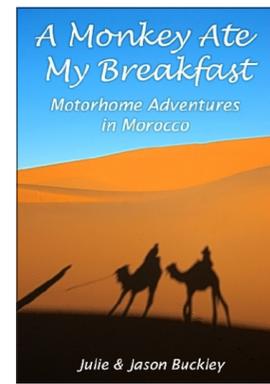
As the Buckleys followed him through the back streets, they began to suss they were being given a tour.

"First we visited a view point high above the town, then a dirty alley next to the mosque. He couldn't take us to the main sights as the official tour guides were there.

"Soon it began to rain so we said we wanted to go back but he insisted we carried on. Poor Charlie was drenched, we all were, but we didn't have a clue where we were or how to get back to Dave, so we had to carry on following him. As we walked along I gestured to Jason to give me the cash from his wallet, so we could try to minimise the cost by pretending we had limited cash. But of course he'd already seen our money, so it was never going to work," says Julie.

After haggling for five minutes the 'guide' suddenly asked if they had any wine.

"This shocked us as we believed Muslims didn't drink. Seeing a chance to get the deal done and get away we said we did and grabbed a litre box of Carrefour Discount wine from our wardrobe. We'd come stocked up as it's tricky to buy in Morocco. Keen-eyed Arthur spotted the other boxes in the wardrobe and offered to



The Buckleys' book about their adventure, A Monkey Ate My Breakfast.

buy some from us for quite a bit more than we'd paid for them," says Julie.

"We agreed a price for the 'tour' and to sell him a few boxes of our wine, which he needed in a non see-through plastic bag."

As the days passed, they found themselves transformed from nervous tourists into more enlightened travellers.

"After reading the book you're left with a vivid sense of not only Morocco the country, but also of the human interactions and emotions experienced exploring this exotic land. The only problem is you might want to buy a second-hand motorhome and head off to sunnier shores yourself," says Julie.

● A Monkey Ate My Breakfast is available from Amazon, paperback £7.95 or eBook £3.91 and www.smashwords.com priced £3.25.

To follow the couple's blog go to www.ourtour.co.uk.

LATEST DVD RELEASES

**The Master (15)** Lancaster Dodd (Philip Seymour Hoffman) is the figurehead of a burgeoning 1950s philosophical movement known as The Cause. His followers congregate in drawing rooms across America and Lancaster is delighted to welcome an alcoholic war veteran, Freddie Quell (Joaquin Phoenix), into the fold as his "guinea pig and protege".

Lancaster's forthright wife, Peggy (Amy Adams), recognises Freddie as a damaged soul and tries to curb his impulses. However, that primal rage, which percolates inside Freddie, proves useful when Lancaster encounters resistance to his argument and even scorn from his own son (Jesse Plemons).

The Master is an overlong demonstration of virtuoso film-making that is by turns dazzling and boorishly pretentious. Paul Thomas Anderson's emotionally wrought tale is easy to admire for its ambition and verve, but hard to worship for the protracted sequences of pointlessness. The cast's commitment to their roles is unswerving. Phoenix drifts through scenes in a drowsy stupor, Hoffman is charismatic and Adams delivers a steely supporting performance.



★★★

**Premium Rush (Cert 12)** Wilee (Joseph Gordon-Levitt) slaloms through traffic on the streets of Manhattan as a bicycle courier alongside his girlfriend Vanessa (Dania Ramirez) and arch-rival Manny (Woile Parks). Dispatcher Raj (Asif Mandvi) sends Wilee to Columbia University to collect an envelope from Nima (Jamsie Chung). Soon after, crooked cop Bobbi Monday (Michael Shannon) attempts to procure the package, but Wilee resists and pedals furiously towards lower Manhattan, determined to meet his delivery deadline.

Unfolding largely in real time with occasional flashbacks to plug gaping plot holes, Premium Rush is a testosterone-fuelled chase along the streets and avenues of the Big Apple. The cast perform many of the tricks and stunts, adding to the sense of danger because a car could suddenly swerve into their path. To emphasise the peril, rough footage over the end credits shows the back window of a taxi cab smashed and lead actor Gordon-Levitt standing nearby, blood coursing down his arm. For the opening 30 minutes, Premium Rush is an adrenaline-pumping blast but the action becomes repetitive.



★★★

**Utopia – Series One (Cert 18)** Recently broadcast on Channel 4, Utopia is a major six-part drama revolving around a cult graphic novel called The Utopia Experiments, which is rumoured to predict the most catastrophic events of the 20th Century, even though most critics and historians dismiss the book as claptrap. The book's manuscript is acquired by a small group of people, and these virtual strangers become targets of a shadowy organisation known only as The Network. Thus, post-grad student Becky (Alexandra Roach), troubled 11-year-old boy Grant (Oliver Woolford), IT consultant Ian (Nathan Stewart-Jarrett) and conspiracy theorist geek Wilson (Adeel Akhtar) go on the run with hired assassins Arby (Neil Maskell) and Lee (Paul Ready) in hot pursuit.



★★★

Waterstones Nottingham's top ten books

- 1 Instructions for a Heatwave by Maggie O'Farrell
- 2 Gone Girl by Gillian Flynn
- 3 The Hundred Year Old Man Who Climbed Out of a Window and Disappeared by Jonas Jonasson
- 4 The Fields by Kevin Maher
- 5 The Fast Diet by Michael Mosley and Mimi Spencer
- 6 Cloud Atlas by David Mitchell
- 7 The Hairy Bikers' Great Curries by Si King and Dave Myers
- 8 Toby's Room by Pat Barker
- 9 The Hummingbird Bakery Cake Days by Tarek Malouf
- 10 The Daylight War by Peter V. Brett