



Travels through France and Italy (Tauris Parke Paperbacks)

Tobias Smollett

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In 1763 Tobias Smollett set sail from Folkestone to Boulogne. He would not return to England for two years, during which time he travelled extensively - and in a notoriously ill-tempered fashion - through much of France and Italy. Smollett, seemed 'determined to be pleased with nothing' and was 'sardonic, satirical and decidedly gloomy'. In Paris, everything had 'shrunk' and was twice as expensive as his last visit. Versailles was a 'dismal habitation'. In Rome, he felt that Michelangelo's Last Judgement resembled a mob; his inn in San Remo was more miserable than the worst ale-house in England and in Lerici he was sure he would be poisoned. And yet, there were places where even Smollett could not fail to be captivated. The Maison Carrée in Nimes was 'ravishingly beautiful', Nice was enchanting and the port of Genoa 'dazzling'. His obvious pleasure in the landscapes through which he passed, his keen eye for colourful, telling details and the fact that his letters appear virtually as they were written beautifully illuminate both Smollett's character and the places he visited. Funny, honest and full of subtle magic, Travels through France and Italy is a rare and revealing portrait of 18th century Europe at a time when Marie Antoinette had just become queen of all France, the Grand Tour was in its infancy and Cannes was a quiet fishing village.

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