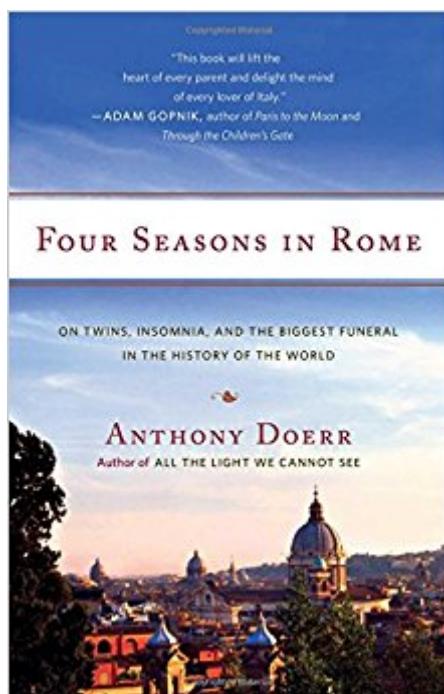


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# Four Seasons In Rome: On Twins, Insomnia, And The Biggest Funeral In The History Of The World



## Synopsis

From the author of the acclaimed Pulitzer Prize-winning #1 New York Times bestseller *All the Light We Cannot See*, a "dazzling" (Azar Nafisi, author of *Reading Lolita in Tehran*) memoir about art and adventures in Rome. Anthony Doerr has received many awards—from the New York Public Library, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the American Library Association. Then came the Rome Prize, one of the most prestigious awards from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and with it a stipend and a writing studio in Rome for a year. Doerr learned of the award the day he and his wife returned from the hospital with newborn twins. *Exquisitely Observed, Four Seasons in Rome* describes Doerr's varied adventures in one of the most enchanting cities in the world. He reads Pliny, Dante, and Keats -- the chroniclers of Rome who came before him—and visits the piazzas, temples, and ancient cisterns they describe. He attends the vigil of a dying Pope John Paul II and takes his twins to the Pantheon in December to wait for snow to fall through the oculus. He and his family are embraced by the butchers, grocers, and bakers of the neighborhood, whose clamor of stories and idiosyncratic child-rearing advice is as compelling as the city itself. This intimate and revelatory book is a celebration of Rome, a wondrous look at new parenthood, and a fascinating story of a writer's craft—the process by which he transforms what he sees and experiences into sentences.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Acclaimed novelist and short story writer Doerr turns out a well-observed chronicle of his family's year in Rome, when he was a fellow at the American Academy of Arts and Letters. Doerr is a

precise, lyrical writer who, dividing his book into seasons, captures in equal measures the wonder of the Italian countryside, the mind-boggling history of the Eternal City and the measured joys and trials of parenting twin baby boys. Upon their autumn arrival, it is the boys who most connect Doerr and his wife to their new city: "Grown men in suits stop and crouch over the stroller and croon. Older men in particular. Che carini. Che belli. What cuties. What beauties." In Spring, Doerr captures well the color and emotion of the vigil for the dying Pope John Paul II, providing insight into the man and his death: "More than three miles of artwork hang in the Vatican Museum and the pope could have any of it brought in front of him...Instead, he wants only to hear something read from the Bible in Polish." The memoir is full of other such rewarding passages, and anyone with fond memories of Rome will want to savor it slowly. Illustrations. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

The recipient of an American Academy fellowship, Doerr, his wife, and their twin newborns are on their way to Rome for a year. Cultural isolation, the death of John Paul II, struggles to complete a novel, and the tales of first-time parenthood uniquely blend together as Doerr meanders his way through a one-year Roman holiday. Along the way, he meets Romans quick to praise his twins, Romans quick to prejudge an American, and Romans happy to share the secrets of their city with him. Set against this backdrop, Doerr finds it difficult to focus on the novel he plans on writing; instead, like so many other visitors, he falls for the Eternal City. For readers who have been to Rome, Doerr's reflections will leave them longing for a return trip. For those who have not, Doerr's stories of piazzas and pizzas will have them checking travel arrangements. Either way, this memoir is a wonderful combination of a writer's two dominant struggles: cultural identity and family. Blair ParsonsCopyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Wonderfully written memoir by the author of *All the Light We Cannot See*. The author, his wife and their twin 6 month old boys relocate to Rome for a year where he hopes to write a book "about the French occupation during WWII". His descriptions of Rome, the disorientation of being a new parent, life in a foreign country are all great. And every time he expresses doubt about the book he is trying to write you want to whisper into the pages "You're going to finish it. And it will be AMAZING"

I have really enjoyed the opportunity to read Anthony Doerr's *Four Seasons in Rome* this term. If Robert Hughes' book on Rome is seen as something of an objective analysis of Roman history and culture, Doerr's book is a much more subjective reading experience. It's instantly engaging and welcoming to the reader, creating a rich sense of place with a narrative that feels often like poetry. There is no sense of anything other than an honest account of the Doerr's family experiences in Rome: no underlying cynicism or inflated sense of ego to get between the reader and the text. The author's gentle attitude is often expressing a profound sense of wonder not only of Rome itself, but, I would argue, his lovely family seen through the lens of Rome and the Roman people. One of my favorite passages is the following excerpt concerning his son; it really captures the purity of personal experience and thought conveyed within these pages.

Swaddled in his Moses basket, wires trailing out the bottom, his monitor flashing green, green, green, his entire four-pound body motionless except his eyelids, it seemed he understood everything I was working so hard to understand: his mother's love, his brother's ceaseless crying; he was already forgiving me for my shortcomings as a father; he was the distillation of a dozen generations, my grandpa's grandpa's grandpa, all stripped into a single flame and stowed still-burning into the thin slip of his ribs. I'd hold him at the window and he'd stare out into the night, blue tributaries of veins pulsing in his neck, his big eyelids slipping down now and then, and it would feel as if tethers were falling away, and the two of us were gently rising, through the glass, through the trees, through interweaving layers of atmosphere, into whatever was beyond the sky.

One aspect of the book that I particularly appreciate is the author's emphasis of understanding a place through the eyes of its people. He's not a simple tourist or traveller, he's experiencing Rome through the act of truly living there: mingling in the markets, strolling the ancient streets, speaking--or attempting to speak--with its residents, and, in short, truly living in the place. I know my upcoming visit will be but a fraction of the length of his, but I hope I may leave Rome with a much greater sense of what this city is all about when my time comes to head home. Like Doerr, I don't see most of this knowledge coming from being a tourist *per se*, but as something along the lines of a (very) short-term resident.

Beautifully written, this is an evocative memoir of the glories of both modern day and ancient Rome while navigating new fatherhood of twin boys. Oh, yes, and the hard work of writing, too. Doerr makes you laugh, wince and cry throughout, while you deepen your understanding of our bittersweet human condition. Outstanding.

Mr. Doerr is a wonderful writer, as everyone who has read *All the Light We Cannot See* must know.

This very personal story of his young family living in Rome for a year is elegantly told. He was very open about life with two babies, a writer's struggle to put words on paper, and his enjoyment of the ancient city.

I love all the travel/foreign country books such as those written by Bill Bryson and Frances Mayes. This fell right into that category of transporting you to another place and living awhile in someone else's shoes. Anthony Doerr doesn't just spend a year in Rome working at the American Academy of Arts and letters, he does so with his wife and twin newborns in tow. All the beautiful descriptions of Rome are in there, along with a very realistic look at the frustrations of living in a country where you don't speak the language and where customs are so different. Throw in two baby boys and everything becomes ten times more challenging. The romance of the adventure is tempered with the realism of daily struggle. I felt like I got a true glimpse of living in Rome as an ex-pat versus the romanticized version of it being all sunshine and roses. Definitely worth a read if you enjoy this type of book

Books recounting personal travel experiences are on my list of favorite genres. I found this particular book to be very authentic and moving. The author's experience of living in Rome for a year with his wife and twin boys had me entranced from the outset. The way the couple struggles with the demands of being new parents, along with living in an ancient & exotic city like Rome, where the culture is new and they don't speak the language, made for a very interesting read. I like Doerr's writing style. It is personal but also reflective of larger issues. His life philosophies are extremely thoughtful and sophisticated for such a young man. I anticipate great works from him in the future.

After reading All the Light We Cannot See, I wanted to read everything by this author. This memoir is not at all plot driven, not exciting or dramatic, but it has his poetic, calm manner of writing and it happens to focus on the year he worked on the novel I had just read. Also, our family had just visited Rome, so it was interesting to hear their experience in Italy. In this memoir, Mr. Doerr and his wife and baby boy twins live in Rome while he is a fellow at the American Academy. Here is a link from the NPR website with a podcast interview about the book:

<http://www.npr.org/books/titles/138309407/four-seasons-in-rome-on-twins-insomnia-and-the-biggest-funeral-in-the-history-of>

A year to remember as Doerr and his wife struggle with twin babies and navigate life in a new

country, with a new language and customs. The description of the heat of a Roman summer tallies with my own memory of just one stifling day in Rome at the end of September.

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