

Escape to Provence is the true story of two remarkable women who, with style and energy, carved out new lives for themselves in the South of France in the first part of the last century. An American, Elisabeth Parrish Starr, and an Englishwoman, Winifred (Peggy) Fortescue, the author of the best-selling *Perfume from Provence*, both escaped to Provence for quite different reasons. Elisabeth as the result of a personal tragedy, coupled with a need to live her life without censure, and Peggy because she and her husband felt that in Provence 'one could be poor with dignity'.

After dangerous aid work on the Somme during the Great War, Elisabeth bought an ancient house in the hills above Cannes, drew other expatriate friends around her and, with a now widowed Peggy, lived a bucolic existence in their Provençal village until the threat of another conflict changed their lives for ever. Peggy raced to safety in Sussex, in England, while Elisabeth fell under the oppressive Vichy regime that affected everyone in the region during the dark years of war. When the South of France was liberated by American and French forces, Peggy returned to a Provence that would never be the same again.

Over the years their lives became involved with those of Consuelo, Duchess of Marlborough, the poet John Betjeman, the dashing Spitfire pilot Richard Hillary, the artist Rex Whistler and the families of President Theodore Roosevelt and Charles, 6th Marquess of Anglesey. As well as the story of two unusual women, *Escape to Provence* is also a portrait of an era.



Photo: Guy Stockton

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Maureen Emerson, from an Irish-Austrian background, grew up in London – for which she is eternally grateful. Marrying young, she brought up her family in North Africa, Lebanon, Dallas and Singapore, before settling in Provence for twenty-two years. There she worked as a local co-ordinator for CBS and NBC during the media festivals at Cannes and Monte Carlo.

While still harbouring a strong affection for Provence, Maureen has now settled in Sussex with her husband.

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