



The Pelee Project: One Woman's Escape from Urban Madness

Jane Christmas

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Back in 2000, Jane Christmas was, like millions of others, an exhausted single working mother with a punishing agenda of work, domestic, and parenting duties. Weekdays were an urban triathlon, weekends evaporated into mile-long to-do lists. Jane found herself drained, living beyond her means emotionally, physically, and financially. She dreamed of a simpler life, but, like everyone else, worried about the consequences of disconnecting from the frenetic working world. A highway accident changed all that. After walking away from a crash that should have killed her, she did the unthinkable and booked a three-month leave of absence from her job, put her home up for sale, and moved with her 10-year-old daughter to Pelee Island, a remote community of 180 in the middle of Lake Erie. Does the absence of a pedal-to-the-metal schedule freak her out, or does it transform her from den mother to Zen mother? Jane published a 15-part series about her sabbatical in the National Post, and her adventure caused an immediate and huge buzz. Readers were captivated by someone who had the nerve to put the brakes on life. The Pelee Project is Jane's full memoir of her hilarious faux pas, anecdotes, and epiphanies on the island, all told in that refreshingly honest voice that attracted so many to her columns. The Pelee Project is an inspiring tale of personal transformation and self-discovery.

This edition is no longer in print.

The Pelee Project: One Woman's Escape from Urban Madness Details

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Author : Jane Christmas

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Connie Lukey says

I stumbled across this little gem when googling Canadian women fiction writers. I enjoyed it lots and would enjoy reading more from this author.

Erika Nerdypants says

I loved this book when I read it a few years ago. At the time I was looking after six kids, working full time, going to school part-time and taking care of a house and garden. I could only dream of taking a year off to live simply in nature, reflect on my choices so far and contemplate my future. The book tells Jane's story of doing exactly that, and lets the reader follow along. Sigh. Must read this again.

Donna says

I had a hard time with this audiobook. It was a constant struggle because the narrative voice (not the narrator) was off-putting to me and I found it tedious to separate that from the actual message of the story. The story was appealing, but her attempts at humor (and there were many) just fell flat and they were just plain awkward. That part was 2 stars but I will add a star because the message was appealing.

Anne says

I wasn't a fan of this book. The idea was good, but the execution was high school level (which is surprising, considering her profession). She did make some good points about simplifying and simplicity at the end and I did enjoy some of the stories, but the writing was mediocre and I didn't feel like she had anything new to say. Maybe I just couldn't relate to her well enough (I'm single, have no children, and have zero interest in \$600 shoes).

Nancy says

This was my first read of Jane Christmas, an author recommended by my sister, and I must say I enjoyed the book! Jane and her daughter Zoe spent three months, January - February - March, living on Pelee Island in 2011. Jane wrote weekly columns about the experience for the National Post. Her decision to take this three month sabbatical from a salaried job was framed as a spiritual journey. Her book is topical and introspective. I love the transition from busy urban person to slowed down reflective rural person and especially appreciate her final reflections and tips for slowing down.

I could have read this book in a weekend but it lent itself well to the past month I have had where I could read one or two chapters at the end of the day and not lose anything when I picked it up the next evening. In

fact it really should be read more slowly in keeping with the experience the book presents.

I think this is an important book to read at this time in history when we are ramping up to a faster and faster pace and taking convenience for granted.

I have three more of Jane's books on my Kobo and that is where I am going next.

Carol-Anne says

After spending some time on Pelee Island in the summer we were enchanted by the island and had the same thoughts about living on the island as we boarded the ferry. This book is topical read with many people are trying to simplify their lives. A light and interesting read.

Cindy Robinson says

An interesting read. While a sabbatical from life isn't for everyone, the opportunity to stop and reflect on what is important in life is something we should all do and Jane provide good insight for that journey.

Susan Earle says

I've been a fan of Jane Christmas' for some time and have always wanted to read her first book. This is the story of one woman who realized that she was at the end of her rope (or close to it) and decided to do something positive about it. She took a sabbatical and in the process learned some important things about herself.

I've since read her next two books, and am looking forward to her most recent.

Life is a journey and reading about the journeys that other women take, is always something I appreciate. I thank the women who are brave enough to share their journeys in print.

Susan says

Having grown up in Toronto I was familiar with places mentioned in this book. I fell in love with the idea of the author living on Pelee Island over the winter. Talk about culture shock! I would read the book again in a heartbeat.

Jane says

This is one of Jane Christmas's earlier books; her children are quite young, she's divorced, and living a very busy urban life with a job that places many demands on her. One day, she has a bad car accident on the highway, is mercifully uninjured, but finds herself beginning to wonder what life is really all about. In order to review and change her life, she spends several months on Pelee Island. There are some aspects of the book that I didn't like (such as her lack of interest in the preservation of endangered species) but I do admire Christmas's ability to describe her driving desire to change her life for the better. You don't have to have been in a high-powered urban job to relate to that - many of us want to slow down, reflect on our internal life, and enjoy the world around us in a simpler, less competitive way. It's the process of doing this that intrigues me. A sojourn on a metaphorical Pelee Island sounds pretty good to me! I also like the way she uses a day walk as a way to reflect spiritually in addition to the physical benefits - something I myself do daily.

Sonya says

Great book. Loved reading about her journey. Disagreed with the theory of some of the retreat aspects. Happy to hear that it lead her into a new life...but I had to go to her website to find that out.

Mridula says

This was a light, fun read. Christmas is an engaging writer and I burst out laughing on more than one occasion. I'm left curious about Pelee and the inhabitants that call the island home. Overall it's a good book.

Silvia Hajas says

Join Jane Christmas on a journey as she takes you through her transformation from the rat race to the slow pace by embarking on a 3 month sabbatical with her 10 yo daughter. A spiritual journey ensues on the island of Pelee, Canada and Jane is rejuvenated and reborn. She discovers what really matters to her and becomes present to her children. Along the way Jane forms a wonderful bond with her thriving and blossoming daughter. Her future holds the promise of a less stressful and more peaceful road as she refuses to step back on the merry-go-round of urban madness.

Meredith says

I mildly enjoyed this very mildly interesting book. The writing was was featherweight, and it lacked tension and resolution. It also had little of the sort of dry, clever humour and spontaneity that I've come to expect from travel writing. The author, eager for the reader to believe that she'd gotten closer to nature in her foray out of town, made me grit my teeth when she referred to snakes as "slimy", a fallacy that you're supposed to know is wrong by the age of six, and betraying a much lower standard than I'd expect from a former National Post journalist. However, it's amusing that smartphones and Google weren't yet pervasive when this book lamenting "the rat race" was written - hmmm, how much worse is it now? - and it has sparked my interest in someday visiting Pelee Island.

Amy says

A very interesting and well-written memoir. This book is an inspiration for those who are running too fast trying to be perfect employees, parents, neighbours and friends and also for those who are transitioning to retirement. Shows what good things can happen when one "goes with the flow" and is open to new opportunities and friendships. Also demonstrates the healing power of solitude and silence.
