



## The Summer Visitors

*Fiona O'Brien*

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**The Summer Visitors** Fiona O'Brien

**'One of the smartest writers of popular fiction around.'** Irish Independent

**Summer has arrived in Ballyanna, and so too has a mysterious visitor ...**

American documentary maker Daniel O'Connell is renting the beautiful Cable Lodge for the summer. He's hoping that three months researching an old cable station in a remote village on the south-west coast of Ireland will help him and his traumatised son finally move on from the accident that killed his wife.

Meanwhile local hotel owner's daughter Annie Sullivan has communication problems of her own to deal with. Home on sabbatical from her life in London, she's keeping a secret from her dysfunctional family and trying to save them and the hotel from their latest drama.

As summer draws to a close in Ballyanna, both Dan and Annie are forced to confront the pasts they've been escaping. But will they be able to grasp the future that lies ahead?

***The Summer Visitors* is a heart-warming story about love, second chances and moving on.**

## The Summer Visitors Details

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Author : Fiona O'Brien

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## From Reader Review The Summer Visitors for online ebook

### Colleen Maclennan says

Quaint Irish story of finding love when you are not looking for it. Story of losses but finding solace eventually. Scenery is typical of a small Irish village . All families have hardships and it is not easy dealing with them . Alcohol, keeping secrets , avoidance sometimes help but in the end the truth although painful and cruel prevails.

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### Laura says

I have a love of Ireland. Maybe it is my Irish heritage coming into play. But, there is just something romantic about the emerald island.

Ballyanna is a remote village full of history. Daniel O'Connell is an American documentary maker who has come to town to research an old cable station. He is also hoping for his family to find healing from the death of his wife.

Annie is the daughter of the local hotel owner, home on a sabbatical from her London job. She brings with her a secret of the failed relationship and finds herself struggling to survive in close proximity to her dysfunctional family.

Dan and Annie find themselves drawn to each other as they both journey on a path to healing. The question is whether they can let go of the past to embrace a future together.

Overall, a fun read with a story full of second chances as well as knowing when to wash your hands. There is a bit of mysticism included with one of the secondary characters. He is a priest returned home from years as a missionary. He carries his own secrets including the ability to communicate with lost souls. I don't want to spoil the story, but will say that someone closely connected to Dan is one of these lost souls in need of help to cross over.

Note ~ I did receive an advance reader copy via NetGalley. All opinions are my own

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### Sally Coles says

Annie is devastated when she finds out that her boyfriend Ed has been cheating on her and that the other woman is pregnant - something he refused to consider with her - and so she decides to take a 3 month sabbatical and return to help out at her family hotel in Ireland

Dan has had a terrible year after his wife got killed in a car accident and one of his twin sons, Sean, has refused to speak since. His job is making documentaries and so he decides to go to Ireland to research a documentary on the Atlantic cables in the hope that a change of scene and getting away from it all will help heal Sean.

This is a lovely story that I couldn't put down.....I am always a sucker for the Irish stories.....the

relationships and problems all relate to real life and families and the characters were great but with good twists ....and what a lovely place to spend the summer

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### **?Tara Sheehan? says**

Those who know me are going to say I'm biased because I'm reviewing a book by one of my own people so of course I'm going to think highly of anything written by an Irish woman. Everyone knows I think all the Irish have been gifted supernaturally to be excellent storytellers AND it's being put out by an Irish publisher on top of it.

BUT! You would be wrong, well a little bit wrong. Of course I wanted to review it because it's by one of the most amazing women to set the gold standard for Women's Fiction in Ireland. Thankfully though, I don't have to use a thesaurus to look up the antonyms of whatever I think to provide a glowing review just to keep up the idea that the Irish can't write bad books. Thank you Ms. O'Brien for saving my butt by writing a worthy novel that is perfect to have at the ready as the summer holidays approach.

She writes about relationships, love, heartbreak, grief, parenting, faith, family and how fragile everything can be. It is definitely a character driven novel with a whole lot of them but she develops each of them with ease from the beginning and keeps them and their stories from falling over a cliff. I loved how she set up the relationships between the various family members because I could see a lot of similarities with my own family which caught me laughing and shaking my head at times.

Overall this covered the emotional spectrum with the perfect twist to keep you wanting to read til the end. You can't help but get pulled into and ride out the journey with laughter and tears as you discover O'Brien has earned her reputation for being one of the best Fiction writers of the Emerald Isle.

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### **Chelidona says**

I guess this would really be 3.5 stars. I did read it, and I did enjoy parts of it.

I just think this book could have profited from some heavy editing - the first part of the book was dragging on and on, and the book could not decide what genre it wants to be. Some of it was too transparently contrived to hide a big reveal, so when that came, I found myself not caring very much about that revelation.

On the other hand, the last part of the book, between the 60 and the 90% mark on my ebook, were more gripping and I even cried through parts of it. And I loved some characters, like Barry and Gracie.

The ending again ... I do not want to spoil anything, but a lot of things to resolved too quickly. Sure we are going to trust a character who had done exactly nothing to deserve that trust throughout the book to suddenly be wise and the way the family treated Annie even at the end made me mad.

And a minor detail: on the whole, it did a good job of invoking the wild coast of the "Ring of Kerry" but I am not quite getting the point of setting a book in Kerry of all places, and then ignore the inconvenience of the weather there by just repeating over and over who unusually sunny the summer is. There was hardly even a drizzle in the entire book. That spoilt the setting a little bit for me.

So yes, a mixed bag for me.

## **MF Barry says**

Set on the southwestern coast of Ireland, 'The Summer Visitors' by Fiona O'Brien tells a story about communication and mistakes of the past. The fictional town of Ballyanna is the seaside community which hosted the first undersea telegraph cable between Ireland and Newfoundland, Canada. Daniel O'Connell and his twin sons are spending a few months in Ballyanna while he researches the old cable station for a documentary he is making. Annie Sullivan is returning home to Ballyanna to rest from her life in London but also to help her family. Each family lost someone/something and they want to change but don't know how. As in any small town, friends and neighbors assist with a romance, help resolve problems and support the families as they come to terms with the own frailties.

For the first half of the book, I wondered where the story was going: summer romance, drunken Irish stereotypes, cute twins & their new friend, etc. If that was the case, my 2 star rating was ready. Then came a significant story point that changed the book for me and improved the overall story arc. It became an emotional read (I admit that I cried a few times) and touched a few points that most people could emphasize with. You can tell the author knew the real Kerry County because the environment and land descriptions made me want to immediately book a flight. Points for the Force Awakens reference ?

My biggest fault with this story is the multitude of characters with little or nothing to do. The kindly golf pro, the physic neighbor, the parish priest – what is the point and why were they taking up space on the page? Each of these 'characters' could be reference points without having to actually meet them. The best friend seems to be cross-over from her own story but I don't think this is a sequel, more of a continuing story line for Ballyanna.

Overall, an unexpected read that gave more of an emotional punch than I expected from a light hearted beach read. I recommend to anyone looking for a few enjoyable hours and not looking for an in depth character analysis.

This book was provided by the publisher (through Net Galley) in exchange for an honest review.

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## **Cathy Cole says**

The Summer Visitors started off strong and really never let up until the very last page. Set in Ireland, it tells the tale of three very different families who are all experiencing difficulties and emotional trauma. The families, two Irish and one American, all intertwine during a month in the summer and through many encounters, excursions and episodes, they learn about love and life. At times, the narrator of the story is a set of twin 11-year-old boys, their father, his new love interest, her mother, her old flame (the mom's), his sister and occasionally, the father's dead wife. It is unputdownable. With Ireland playing just as much a character as any of the rest, it is a book that stays with you after you turn the last page because the characters experience love, loss and life within is 300-plus pages. There are plot twists and surprises that will keep the reader guessing along with truly superior writing and characters. This book is a treat.

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## Emma Crowley says

It's been so long since I have read anything by Irish writer Fiona O'Brien. When I actually checked when her last book was published it was way back in 2011. Six years is a long gap between books and readers would be hopeful the wait was worth it. Fiona is an author people may not have heard much mention of before and that is a shame. I feel she is vastly underrated and had definitely been up there with the other women's fictions writers I adore.

This new book *The Summer Visitors* has a lovely bright inviting cover which really conjures up images of summer and relaxing with nothing better to do than read a good book. Is this the book that fits into that image? Honestly for the majority of the book I found it quite slow going. I had become familiar with the characters, their various problems and the gorgeous setting but to my mind nothing was actually happening and the summer days in the village of Ballyanna on the south west coast of Ireland seemed to be slipping by fairly uneventfully. It's not until perhaps the last quarter of the book that my opinion changed but I still question whether it was too little too late. Bam you were hit with that moment of shock and revelation that makes you kick yourself that you had never spotted it coming. Upon reflection the hints were all there for the reader to pick on but the fact I didn't see it coming made me realise the book was a lot better in parts than I had been giving it credit for up until that point.

*The Summer Visitors* is a story of love, second chances and finding the courage and strength to move on. The themes throughout the book are handled with sensitivity and care and there is a really summery feeling throughout despite the fact many of the characters are deeply troubled. The setting of Ballyanna although fictional was wonderful. It wasn't too big that people would become lost there yet the village itself and the surrounding landscape and beaches provided a respite and a place to hide for those who needed it. The old cable station, once the scene of such vital work linking America with Ireland, will play a crucial role once again and the theme of communication will also feature heavily. 'Something is disturbing the reliable patters of village life. Something or someone, seems determined to make themselves heard, whatever the cost, however precarious the means. And for one last time, the old cable station, for so long silent, will facilitate a vitally important communication between two very different worlds'.

Annie is 36 and just about to celebrate her fourth anniversary with Ed. She has a beautiful house in Notting Hill and a brilliant job in an advertising agency she helped set up. Babies are next up on her long term agenda but Ed won't entertain it. We soon find out why and Annie finds her life in disarray and with time on her hands as a sabbatical from work is suggested. So Annie turns to the one place where she knows she will find solace and comfort, a place with many memories some good some bad and that place is home in Ballyanna. Annie arrives back to the village at a time when changes are afoot. The family need her to help run the hotel. Her father is 'not well' and her mother is under immense pressure. On one hand I felt Annie was great to step into the breach and keep the hotel going when times were strained as each family member had something they were battling with. She was the strength when others were failing and she was to be admired for this. But on the other hand I had felt she was going to be a major character with a lot of focus on her own story but as the book progressed I felt her own issues were pushed aside and could have been explored far more. I understand she became the glue that held her family together and that she helps Dan but I would have loved more focus on Annie herself, a deeper view instead of the peripheral one I felt we got.

Daniel O'Connell is holidaying in Ballyanna with his twin sons Sean and Pat. He is researching the old cable station and its history but also the break is a chance for his little family to get to know one another again, to find some solace and maybe begin to heal as Daniel has been made a widower through a tragic accident. 'Life goes on. Even if you feel like you're walking through it on autopilot. Someone has stolen his, taken everything he knew, loved and lived by and turned it on its head'. I thought Fiona dealt so well with the grief the family were experiencing and there were numerous sentences I felt the need to stop for a minute and reread and absorb them. It touched a cord with me and I found myself nodding along in agreement with how

they family were feeling and coping on a day to day basis. Said accident has left Sean in a world of his own. A world of silence as he has not uttered a word since the event that left him motherless. This is ironic considering the field of communication Dan has come to study. We do have plenty of chapters from Sean's viewpoint which I felt were needed in the book. The relationship he develops with Annie's niece Gracie was brilliant to observe and although he never uttered one word, the connection between the two was something special to witness. Gracie did more than enough talking for the pair of them and I think she needed that time away from what was going on in her own personal life. Gracie although one of the youngest characters was perhaps my favourite.

Breda the matriarch of the family is under immense pressure, keeping up appearances. On one side the hotel has to be kept going and she is thankful Annie has come home to help. On the other keeping her husband out of trouble as his tenancy for a tippie or too becomes ever more known is now high on her list of priorities. Also the fact her daughter Dee is experiencing troubles of her own as husband John has brought shame on the family is not helping matters. The reader can sense Breda is just pure tired and worn out, that she can't keep battling any more. Decisions need to be made. Should the hotel be sold? How can she help Dee who is going down a bumpy road? How can she protect Gracie from being exposed to a reality no one should have to experience? Onto the scene comes priest Father. Barry McLaughlin -Breda's first love. He is back home after years away in Africa working as a missionary. Old memories stir up for Breda and at a time when she is vulnerable and all around her seems to be falling apart will Barry offer the comfort and answers she so desperately needs? I did think Barry seemed very surplus to requirements. He makes sporadic appearances and I couldn't see how he would fit in with things but once again I was proven surprised.

Fiona O'Brien has written a good story with a lot going on underneath the surface that doesn't become apparent and relevant until much later in this book. There is a complex cast of characters and as relationships and bonds develop over the summer in the small village and secrets are exposed one wonders will there be any happiness or resolution for the people you have invested time reading about? How are all the people connected? Will the village work it's magic? Why did the author use communication as a driving force for the story? The themes do shine through towards the end and things began to make more sense. It's the big reveal that made me glad I persisted with this book as it literally stopped me in my tracks.

Is The Summer Visitors worth a read? Yes it is but it's not my favourite by this author and not one I think will stick in my mind when I come to pick my books of the year. It is one to read on a sun lounger abroad and enjoy it for what it is at the time of reading.

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### **Ellen says**

What a moving, beautiful story of love, loss, betrayal, forgiveness with a touch of good Irish mysticism. Annie returns home to her small, isolated village after the breakup with Ed in London. At the same time, Dan arrives with his family, damaged and heartbroken after a tragedy. Their lives intertwine, as do the rest of the characters, Annie's sister Dee, best friend, Barbara, but most importantly, her courageous and spunky niece, Gracie. This one left a mark on my heart.

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### **Shirley Revill says**

I listened to the audiobook version of this book and the narration was really good. A very interesting story that I really enjoyed.

## **Karen says**

Wow! Loved this book. I'm a huge Fiona O'Brien fan and was so lucky to have won a pre launch copy of The Summer Visitors.

From page 1 this book was 'unputdownable'. I was hooked! The storyline is so unpredictable and the reader doesn't see the twist coming!

The theme throughout the book is 'communication'. Communication between countries, families, friends and also the effect a lack of communication has on people.

The story is set during a fine sunny summer in Kerry. Dan, a documentary maker, and his 11 year old twin boys Pat & Sean arrive in Ballyanna, Co. Kerry from California, following the death of his wife Mary. Sean hasn't spoken a word since the tragic death of his mother. Dan plans to research an old cable station there. Annie Sullivan has fled London with a broken heart & has returned home to assist her Mum with the running of the family hotel and to solve all her family's problems.

Barry left the village 40 years ago as a missionary priest and has returned to spend time with his sister.

There are a lot of characters in this book. But they are so well defined from the start, that it is easy to keep track of who's who.

The relationships within a 'normal' family are well described and played out particularly between siblings- brothers Pat & Sean, sisters Annie & Dee and Jerry & her brother Barry and also between a mother and her children and that of a father and his children.

This book is a rollercoaster of emotion - sadness, happiness, shock. It made me smile, gasp and brought tears to my eyes.

A super read.

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## **Shalini says**

What a beautiful gem of a story, a story of love, life and second chances. A story of hope and forgiveness, from life here and beyond.

The summer visitors are Annie Sullivan, who is coming back home to the village of Ballyanna, after four years and a messy break-up and Daniel O'Connell, his twin sons, Pat and Sean, who are here for the summer, directing his documentary on the Trans-Atlantic cable laid in 1866 between Europe and America.

Annie is back home to help out her mother, Breda, in running the hotel, getting her sister Dee and niece Gracie sorted out, after her brother-in-law's 5 million euro scam and to deal with her father's alcoholism.

Daniel has his own problems to deal with. He lost his wife Mary, a year ago in an auto accident which involved his sons. So Sean has PTSD and doesn't talk and Pat does all the talking for him. The village of Ballyanna, with a backdrop of the ocean and cliffs, weaves its magic, on all the characters in this book. It is a place of healing and a place of resting. A place where anything can happen....

And love happens....

But this is not just a love story. It's so much more. It's about the things we cannot see, but can just feel. It's about family and its core strength. It's about a mother's love for her children and never letting go. It's about giving up her own life for her child. It's about parents wanting to see their children happy. It's about mystics of life and beliefs in spirituality. It's about opening the heart to the possibilities of life...

This is my first book by Fiona O'Brien, written oh, so beautifully. There is a sublime beauty and wonder in

her words. She deals with alcoholism and mental illness with the same sensitivity as she deals with love and family. Humans are flawed but it's these flaws which make us interesting and lovable. All the characters in her book are etched out carefully, be it be, Jerry with her clairvoyance, Barry with his gift, Declan with his charm, Luke Nolan with his scepticism, Connor with his selfishness. Their flaws and insecurities make them more real and this is what makes the book complete...

There is a quote in the book I especially liked,

Everything you do, everything you put out there, however big or small, ripples out to affect other people, for better or for worse

In this life filled with stress and sadness, there are these few books which bring joy to the heart, tears to the eyes and hope to the dreams, for a better future...

I received an ARC from NetGalley and publisher Hachette Books Ireland and this is my honest and unbiased opinion

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## **Maria says**

"Received an Advance Reader Copy in exchange for a fair review"

This is a wonderfully constructed and powerful story dealing with death, bereavement, mental illness, parenting, long lost love and friendship.

There's spirituality in it (and it's something different from religion), which I really liked.

There are beautiful characters and tropes in this story, some of them not as developed as I would have liked (Barry, and the long lost love trope, for example).

I loved the way Fiona O'Brien crafted the strong special bonds between the twins and their parents' love for them.

I also liked that the twins' mother wasn't portrayed as the evil parent and that her somehow undying love for her boys was so beautifully shown throughout the story.

And it's always great to read a story set in beautiful Ireland.

I was a bit confounded by the author's use of verbal tenses, I guess I've yet to figure out the meaning of her strategy

I'm grateful to the publisher, Hachette Books Ireland, and NetGalley for providing a free copy.

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## **Dale Harcombe says**

American Daniel O'Connell's life changed the instant the car crashed with his wife and two sons in it. Death had such a devastating impact that Sean, one of his twin boys, is still traumatised. He no longer speaks.

Daniel comes to Cable Lodge Ballyanna to make a documentary. He hopes the peace and quiet of the little Irish village may help Sean recover his speech. Annie Sullivan is also on her way back to Ballyanna after problems with her lover Ed. But more problems await Annie in Ireland, as she seeks to save the hotel her parents own from disaster and help her mother Breda, and sister Dee with their problems. Her return is made more awkward since Annie and her father have not spoken for four years, since an argument saw her leave for London. Meanwhile priest Barry McLaughlin, is back in Ireland on sick leave and staying with his sister Jerry, who is known as a healer. Fr several people secrets that have been covered up for many years are uncovered during this one summer.

This is a heart-warming story about three families and the way they connect. The characters are easy to relate to, particularly Annie and Dan. Young Gracie, Dee's daughter, is a delight. The same cannot be said about Dee but there are mitigating circumstances. The story is largely told from the twins Sean and Pat's points of view. It deals with problems of mental illness, trauma, effects of alcohol on a family and addiction. Some

people may think that towards the end it gets a bit soppy but I was too involved to care by then. And yes, there were a few tears and also anger at times with certain characters.

The cover gives it very much a chick lit feel but there is more to this book than that. I found this an enjoyable read that deals with some hard topics in a way that kept me engaged and made me care about the characters. And yes, there is a romance as well. If you like a good family story give this one a go. You may well enjoy it as much as I did.

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### **Janette says**

I really enjoyed this book - it is a poignant tale of relationships and emotional trauma. It is well written and drew me straight into the story - I couldn't put it down and finished it very quickly.

Both of the lead characters have had a terrible time - Annie has fled from London with a broken heart after her boyfriend cheats with another woman who is now pregnant and Dan whose wife died suddenly in a terrible car accident. Annie returns home to help out with her family's hotel whilst Dan is holidaying in the area with his twin boys Sean and Pat. Dan is researching the history of the old cable station. The grief experienced by Dan and his family is touching - Sean hasn't spoken a word since the terrible car accident.

The twist which came around half way through the book took me completely by surprise.

I couldn't put this book down but was disappointed to finish it. Beautifully written, superb characters, this book brought a tear to my eye and kept me engrossed throughout.

Highly recommended.

Thank you to NetGalley and the publisher for the opportunity to read this book in return for an honest review.

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