



The Summer Country

Written by Lauren Willig

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The Summer Country

By Lauren Willig

The Summer Country By Lauren Willig

The New York Times bestselling historical novelist delivers her biggest, boldest, and most ambitious novel yet—a sweeping, dramatic Victorian epic of lost love, lies, jealousy, and rebellion set in colonial Barbados.

The Summer Country

The Summer Country Book

1854. From Bristol to Barbados. . . .

The Summer Country Willig

Emily Dawson has always been the poor cousin in a prosperous merchant clan—merely a vicar’s daughter, and a reform-minded vicar’s daughter, at that. Everyone knows that the family’s lucrative shipping business will go to her cousin, Adam, one day. But when her grandfather dies, Emily receives an unexpected inheritance: Peverills, a sugar plantation in Barbados—a plantation her grandfather never told anyone he owned.

The Summer Country Book Review

When Emily accompanies her cousin and his new wife to Barbados, she finds Peverills a burnt-out shell, reduced to ruins in 1816, when a rising of enslaved people sent the island up in flames. Rumors swirl around the derelict plantation; people whisper of ghosts.

The Summer Country Novel

Why would her practical-minded grandfather leave her a property in ruins? Why are the neighboring plantation owners, the Davenants, so eager to acquire Peverills—so eager that they invite Emily and her cousins to stay with them indefinitely? Emily finds herself bewitched by the beauty of the island even as she’s drawn into the personalities and politics of forty years before: a tangled history of clandestine love, heartbreaking betrayal, and a bold bid for freedom.

The Summer Country England

When family secrets begin to unravel and the harsh truth of history becomes more and more plain, Emily must challenge everything she thought she knew about her family, their legacy . . . and herself.

It's not often that I come across a book where I fall in love almost instantly not just with the characters, but also with the setting, the story, the writing – basically everything about the book from the first page to the very last. It's also increasingly rare nowadays for me to get so swept up in a book that I lose track of time and next thing I know, I've finished the book in practically one sitting (and at 480 pages, this was certainly no small feat!). In her newest release *The Summer Country*, author Lauren Willig delivers a beautifully written, sweeping historical saga that felt epic in scope and magnitude, yet did not feel at all like a chore to read.

Set in 19th century Barbados, this family saga spans 4 decades and revolves around two neighboring sugar plantations on the island – Peverills and the adjacent Beckles. Told in a dual timeline format that alternates between 1854 – where we are introduced to Emily Dawson, a vicar's daughter who unexpectedly inherits Peverills when her grandfather dies – and 1812, with the story of the original owner of Peverills, Charles Davenant, and his relationship with Jenny, a slave in the household of the neighboring plantation Beckles. These two separate narratives involving two different sets of characters who live under completely different circumstances don't appear to correlate at first glance, but as the story progresses, the two narratives converge into a seamless, brilliantly woven story that absolutely blew me away. It is usually the case with these dual timeline stories that one narrative is stronger than the other, but with this book, both narratives were equally strong and were so well done that I honestly can't say that I preferred one over the other. Another aspect of this book that made it so endearing to me was the strong character development, especially when it came to the female characters in the story. With historical fiction covering a time and place where society's conventions weren't necessarily favorable to women, I love how Willig was able to make every single female character in this story strong yet realistic, balancing each character's distinct personality with the historical limitations of that time period.

For me, one of the things that set this book apart from other works of historical fiction was its amazing use of language to convey a time and place that felt so authentic, I found myself completely immersed in the time period and setting. The prose (more specifically, the quality of the writing) elevated this book beyond just being great historical fiction – this was written so well in the language of the time that it actually read like a classic novel, which is something rarely seen with books published in modern day. The fact that Willig was able to render a time and place (Barbados in the 19th century) so far removed

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from the current time period (21st century Europe or the United States) in a manner that made it come to life so realistically, speaks to her tremendous skill as a writer. The amount of research that went into this book was astounding – prior to reading this book, I had no idea about the historical significance of Barbados and the slave trade that was so prevalent there during the early nineteenth century, nor did I know much about the cholera epidemic that occurred in that part of the world back in the 1850s. One of the things I love most about reading historical fiction is learning about time periods / people / events that I knew nothing about previously – this book not only taught me a lot, it did so with masterful storytelling that was captivating and had me 100% emotionally invested in the story as well as in its characters, to the point that I didn't want this unforgettable story to end. I'm a picky reader and I don't give 5 stars very often, but this one absolutely deserved it! All in all, this is a perfect summer read -- one that is immersive, captivating, and will definitely make you feel as though you've been transported to another world. Highly recommended!

Received ARC from William Morrow (HarperCollins) via NetGalley. ...more

Summer The Country Song

A run-down sugar plantation was the last thing Emily thought her uncle would leave to her, but Emily was thrilled about it even though her cousin wasn't.

Emily, her cousin, and his wife traveled to Barbados to meet a few people and to see the plantation.

We meet the family from 1812 and the opulence of their home, food, and life style and then turn to 1845 and meet "friends" of the family.

The connection between the time periods was smoothly done. I really liked how Ms. Willig ended one chapter A run-down sugar plantation was the last thing Emily thought her uncle would leave to her, but Emily was thrilled about it even though her cousin wasn't.

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We meet the family from 1812 and the opulence of their home, food, and life style and then turn to 1845 and meet "friends" of the family.

The connection between the time periods was smoothly done. I really liked how Ms. Willig ended one chapter with a comment and started the next chapter with that comment but in a different time period.

Some of the characters were quite devious, and as the pages turned we find out there was more to the family than what was known or heard and something about the plantation and about the Davenant family that someone wanted to keep a secret.

Ms. Willig definitely knows how to use adjectives for describing the characters and settings with her beautiful prose. The characters are described and perfectly portrayed for the time periods.

It was as though I were right there immersed in the lives of the characters whether they were the wealthy or the indentured. I became attached to a few of the characters.

If you enjoy learning about past cultures, delving into life in another country and century, and finding out family secrets that were kept for years, THE SUMMER COUNTRY should be on your summer reading list.

You will definitely get a vocabulary work out. :)

THE SUMMER COUNTRY is another beautiful, enjoyable, well-researched read by Lauren Willig. 5/5

This book was given to me as an ARC by the publisher in exchange for an honest review. ...more

The Summer Country

“I don’t know if I’ve ever read a book that spans four decades. Steeped in family history, family secrets, and family ties. The story is set in Barbados and introduces you to two sets of characters living 40 years apart. 1850 to Emily’s beloved grandfather has passed away and left her a sugar plantation on the island of Barbados. So Emily travels from England to Barbados with her cousin Adam and his wife to check out this plantation that nobody had any idea of. What follows is Emily discovering family history and secrets with deep ties to Barbados. In 1812 Charles and Jenny find themselves in a torrid and forbidden love affair with great consequences. Two tales seamlessly woven together into one beautiful engaging story.

Lauren Willig will completely captivate you with this sweeping family saga. A beautiful story that spans over four decades. Steeped in family history, family secrets, and family ties. The story is set in Barbados and introduces you to two sets of characters living 40 years apart. 1850 to Emily’s beloved grandfather has passed away and left her a sugar plantation on the island of Barbados. So Emily travels from England to Barbados with her cousin Adam and his wife to check out this plantation that nobody had any idea of. What follows is Emily discovering family history and secrets with deep ties to Barbados. In 1812 Charles and Jenny find themselves in a torrid and forbidden love affair with great consequences. Two tales seamlessly woven together into one beautiful engaging story.

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This book was clearly well researched and I learned something about a time and place I knew little about previously. Slavery and the slave trade were a big part of life in Barbados in the early 1800s. I have to admit it was really disturbing to read about people referring to other people as their property and talking about leasing them out. The Cholera outbreak in the 1850s was not as disturbing but was equally as devastating. There was a large cast of characters in the story that took me a while to get straight, but once I did I was completely invested. The story jumped perfectly between time periods that were well marked. Lauren’s Willig’s exquisite storytelling will completely transport you to 19th century Barbados. A well told story full of interesting characters and an engaging plot. A sweeping tale that will appeal to all historical fiction lovers.

Nicola Barber does an exceptional job narrating the audio of this book. So many accents that she completely masters. The audio narration added another layer to this already exquisite story.

*** many thanks to Harper Audio and William Morrow for my copy of this book *** ...more

The Best Summer Country Songs

Lauren Willig's THE SUMMER COUNTRY is a sumptuous read, evoking M.M. Kaye's lush and sweeping tales of nineteenth century colonial life. Set in the island location of Barbados, Willig attains the ideal aim of the historical fiction genre: educating the reader about a little-known part of history while thoroughly engaging them in the stories of the characters. I read THE SUMMER COUNTRY slowly - doling out exquisite chapters one at a time - because there are too few books written today that harken back to that delicious way of storytelling that doesn't rush things just to keep up with modern trends. I would count this one as a new classic and encourage every reader who cares about quality writing to quickly add this one to their list of to-be-favorites. ...more

I want to thank Haper Collins for this ARC. I do love Historical novels but did find this one a little slow in the beginning. Trying to go back and forth from the year 1812 to the year 1854 Barbados and keep the characters straight was a tad tricky. But to Lauren Willig's writing skills I did become totally engrossed in this wonderful story. I would definitely recommend this book.

The Summer Lodge Country House Hotel

I read a lot of historical fiction and noticed the genre seems to be WW2 heavy. I just finished The Summer Country and absolutely loved it. Yes, it's historical fiction but a subject not widely known. Lauren Willig's research shines through as she expertly blends fact with fiction. One of my favorite books is The Thorn Birds and The Summer Country has that same pull for me...sweeping family saga that I don't want to put down and characters that stick with me long after I finish. The Summer Count

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I love the writing style of Ms. Willig. The flow of this story, I can't even explain the emotions I went through reading this. When those a-ha moments hit you and you're totally shocked! So many turns I did not see coming. Kept me on my toes and it was so hard to put down! I want more of these characters.

Thank you to Edelweiss for the ARC and giving me the chance to read for an honest review.