



# 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 Review

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 Novel

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



## The Summer Country

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