



# **It Takes a Village Idiot: A Memoir of Life After the City**

*Jim Mullen*

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Millions of people dream of chucking the city routine and leading the simple country life. Jim Mullen was not one of those people. Even a short weekend in the Hamptons was enough to give him the shakes. He just didn't understand the whole culture of weekend houses. "Why don't they take the money they're going to spend on a second house and buy a better first one? One they don't have to get away from every weekend."

He loved his perk-filled life as a Manhattan columnist: the parties, the openings, the movie screenings, the free junk that public relations people sent him in the mail. He could walk to hundreds of different restaurants from his Greenwich Village home, waste entire afternoons at the Film Forum, people-watch from his window on Christopher Street. Then, calamity.

His wife quit smoking. To keep her mind off cigarettes, she bought a weekend house in the Catskill Mountains of upstate New York. Three hours in the opposite direction from the glitzy Hamptons, the tiny town of Walleye is a parallel universe where things are the exact opposite of New York City. Shopkeepers take checks without ID, strangers wave at you when you drive by, the bank teller knows your name, reservations at restaurants are unnecessary, and parking is free.

There is no weekend crush in Walleye. There is no frenzy for lemongrass or tomatillos at the farmer's market; there are no homes by Frank Gehry or Robert Venturi; no one owns a Land Rover or a BMW. There is no Williams-Sonoma, no Ben & Jerry's, no theme restaurant owned by a celebrity, no microbrewery, no Sharper Image. There isn't a tuna carpaccio with tapénade on a bed of hand-torn frisée within three hours of the place. His mostly dairy-farming neighbors never read *The New York Times*, don't know who Ralph Lauren is, have never heard of Moomba, and have difficulty pronouncing Joe Pesci, yet they manage to live full, productive, and happy lives. How is this possible? It starts to shake Mullen's faith in Manhattanism.

Though the one local radio station goes off at sunset and oregano is on the "exotic food" shelf at the supermarket, Mullen warms to the place. Slowly but surely, the man who once boasted "Life is just a cab away" no longer feels at home on the sidewalks of New York.

*It Takes a Village Idiot* is a deliciously entertaining, eye-opening look at how hard it is to live The Simple Life. A must read if you've ever used the words "flyover country" -- or even if you haven't. "Imagine *A Year in Provence* written by Dennis Miller," said one New York writer, "and you'll have some idea of the fun of *It Takes a Village Idiot*."

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