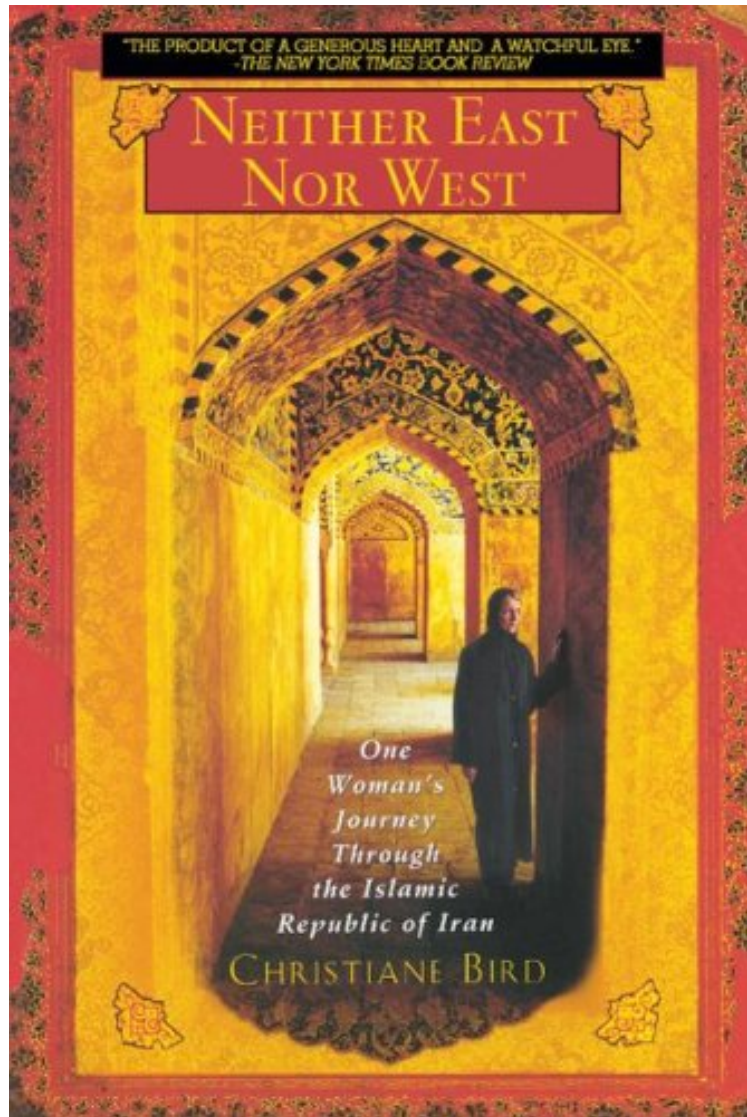


[Ebook pdf] Neither East Nor West: One Woman's Journey Through the Islamic Republic of Iran

Neither East Nor West: One Woman's Journey Through the Islamic Republic of Iran

Christiane Bird

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Christiane Bird : Neither East Nor West: One Woman's Journey Through the Islamic Republic of Iran before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Neither East Nor West: One Woman's Journey Through the Islamic Republic of Iran:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Couldn't Stay Awake for This BookBy Pamela R.BORING! Maybe Bird's visit was fascinating to her, but it put me to sleep. I struggled through the first hundred pages and gave up. And

after reading those hundred pages, I would never, ever want to visit this country. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Great. H.Sh.By Dr. Homayoon ShidniaExcellent. H. Sh.2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. One Star Off For Being Too PCBy CookieMonsterSchwartzI could not put this book down which is why I highly highly recommend it. However, my frustration is that she paints an extremely rosy picture of Iran so to make the point that Iran is not as frightful as most Americans find it to be. However, I know many Iranians who have told me they would NEVER travel alone (ESPECIALLY the women). The author took many chances, quite frankly many idiotic chances- she went to a city near the Afghanistan border right at the start of the American invasion! She even lied to her husband about going there. The fact that she was lucky is besides the point. Writing about the "real" Iran is impossible; you are an American. Accept it and stop being so frustrated that you have blond hair. The Iranians are descendants of Aryans for crying out loud; the author even stated several times that many Iranians she saw had piercing blue eyes. Finally, my last frustration with this book is her lack of discussion about Iran and their views on Jews Israel. Would she have been able to travel to Iran if she had been Jewish? Doubtful. Despite my criticism, I really did enjoy the book and I hope the author takes this as constructive criticism.

Fusing travelogue, historical inquiry, and interviews with Iranians from all walks of life, *Neither East Nor West* is a landmark contribution to travel writing and to cultural studies, as well as a timely illumination of a nation deeply misunderstood by most Westerners. In describing life in Iran today, Christiane Bird, an American who spent part of her childhood there, breaks the silence that has surrounded Iran's culture -- unlike its politics -- for nearly twenty years. Traveling alone and largely by bus, Bird journeys from the modern, bustling capital of Tehran to the medieval holy city of Qom, from the sacred pilgrimage site of Mashhad -- visited by more than twelve million Shi'ites annually -- to the isolated valley of Alamut, once home to the legendary cult of the Assassins. She visits mosques, public baths, Khomeini's former home, and a Caspian Sea resort, and attends prayer meetings and a horse racing meet. Along the way, she talks to muleteers and ayatollahs, Kurds and Turkomans, Westernized and traditional Iranians -- many of whom invite her home for a cup of tea. The result is an astounding, insightful journey into the Islamic Republic of Iran -- in all its beauty, ferocity, and contradiction.

.com The recent opening of Iran has been met by the curiosity of a number of writers wanting to understand and illuminate a country that has been shrouded by a lack of access--and prejudice--for three decades. *Neither East Nor West* joins *Honeymoon in Purdah* by Alison Wearing and *Persian Mirrors* by Elaine Sciolino in its humane examination of Iran and its willingness to lay aside the received orthodoxies of both nations and listen with a receptive (if not always open) mind. Once again, Iranians reveal themselves to be a generous, literate, and fun-loving people, and their nation far more complex, multilayered, and Westernized than news stories reveal. As a young child, Bird spent three years in the northwestern town of Tabriz where her father served as a doctor for the Presbyterian ministry. She returned in 1998 to see the effects of the Islamic Revolution herself. One of her first acts was to look for the infamous DEATH TO AMERICA sign which hung at the Laleh International Hotel. Two hotel employees with grizzled cheeks gave me a half-flirtatious, half-interrogatory stare. Taking a deep breath, I asked them about the sign. "Gone! Gone!" they said, laughing as if I were asking about ancient history. "You are American?" This could be the theme of Bird's travels, where everyone--from security police to government officials to men yelling "Welcome to Iran!" as they whiz by on their scooters--are practically ecstatic to meet an American. In the privacy of their homes they watch the Flintstones and CNN, listen to Michael Jackson and Metallica, drink alcohol and complain, mostly about the economy. In the end, Iranians start to seem not so unlike Americans in many ways--criticizing their government while loving their country all the same. The fact that Bird, like Sciolino and Wearing before her, is a woman makes her story even more interesting, as she looks behind the veil and finds both the power and the constrictions that it represents. Her biggest strength is in asking direct questions about such ticklish issues as women's rights, but at times, her of lack heavy-handedness is enough to make you squirm. Wearing, with her lovely sense of humor and openness, did a superb job befriending and capturing the people. Bird, on the other hand, seems to have no sense of humor and has an irritating habit of getting irritated. Nevertheless, she fills in the essential historical and political background Wearing couldn't be bothered with. Together, the two paint a penetrating portrait of a rich and evocative land. --Lesley ReedFrom Publishers WeeklyBird's account of her travels in Iran is enriched by her having spent three years of her childhood in Tabriz during the reign of the Shah. Not nave about popular Western misconceptions of Iran, she sets out to debunk them in this book: "we had demonized Iran so completely that it no longer seemed to be populated by human beings." Still, she is surprised by encounters with her own assumptions. In a relatively liberal section of Tehran, for instance, she finds young people flirting with one another, in open defiance of the komiteh (a watchdog for illicit activities), and even drinking alcohol--forbidden in Islamic society. Even so, she encounters religious devotion in people of every class and level of education. "What is it," she asks, "about the human mind that likes to categorize so, neatly slipping people into slots, which in Iran usually translates into: educated, middle-class, and Westernized = nonreligious; uneducated, poor, or working class = religious." Gradually, and only to a certain degree, Bird comes to understand the Iranians' dedication to Islam. This travelogue affords fascinating

portraits of people of many social circumstances, while not sugarcoating the gritty realities of life in Iran. But it is Bird's continual investigation of her own and her culture's prejudices that distinguishes this book, and that will help shine light into a part of the Middle East hitherto hidden from the West by its own misunderstanding. (Mar.)Forecast: While booksellers shouldn't expect breakout sales, they should take note that with the recent publication of *Persian Mirrors* by Elaine Sciolino and *Honeymoon in Purdah* by Alison Wearing, Bird's narrative indicates a trend of books written by women traveling in Iran. Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc.From Library JournalBird (The Jazz and Blues Lover's Guide to the U.S.) lived in Iran for three years as a child. Currently living in New York and a former travel writer for the New York Daily News, she studied Persian in the hopes of returning. This is the account of her travels in Iran in 1998. She stayed at the homes of contacts of her family and friends and experienced firsthand a very different culture than her own. Always questioning religious and political beliefs, she nevertheless listened to the experiences of a variety of people. She describes how she began to recognize cultural differences and become aware of when she was misinterpreting someone's words or actions. Fascinating descriptions show public and private places that few Westerners are allowed to view. This book will be of interest to those who enjoy travel essays and those studying Iran. Alison Hopkins, Queens Borough P.L., Jamaica, NY Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc.