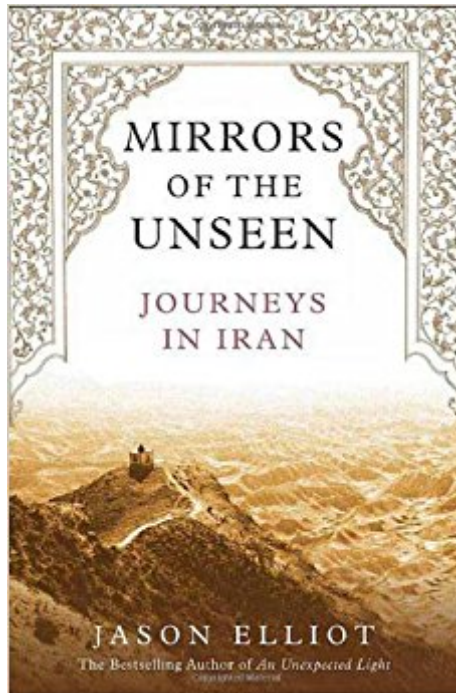


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Mirrors Of The Unseen: Journeys In Iran



Synopsis

In our current climate of war and suspicion, Iran is depicted as the "next" rogue nation that America and the world must "deal with." But the rhetoric about nuclear weapons and jihad obscures the real Iran: an ancient nation and culture, both sophisticated and isolated, which still exists clandestinely in major cities as well as the country's remote mountains and deserts. Jason Elliot has spent the last four years traveling in Iran, and in this remarkable book he reveals the many sides of the culture, art, architecture, and people that Westerners cannot see or conveniently ignore. Part close reading of symbols and images, part history, and part intimate interviews with Iranians of many different kinds--from wealthy aristocrats at forbidden parties to tribal horsemen in the most remote mountain villages, who have never seen a Westerner--*Mirrors of the Unseen* is a beautiful and thought-provoking book by one of the world's most acclaimed adventurers and authors.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Starred Review. Elliot (*An Unexpected Light*) traveled to Iran and returned with this finely detailed, timely portrait of a country and culture precariously balanced between East and West, dark and light, integration and Armageddon. Whether careening around the smog and traffic clogged capital city of Tehran in a battered cab or crawling through the rubble-strewn ruins of Persepolis, capital of the ancient Persian kings, Elliot's keen eye, supple mind and compelling way with words captures the rich, complex, contradictory essence of Iran, its history and people. Everywhere he travels, Elliot explores a central question--will Iran, a country with a deep and abiding history of scientific innovation, fine art, high culture and beauty, step into modernity or will the revolutionary mullahs, the

guardians and promoters of Islamic fundamentalism, take the country further down the road of isolation. In the cities, a culture of duality exists – behind closed doors, liquor flows freely, music is enjoyed and women are free to express themselves fully. On the streets, however, religious extremism rules, manifested by squads of bearded enforcers looking out for infractions of their version of Islamic law. With Iran so central in the news, this is a good read for the armchair traveler and amateur geo-political strategist alike. (Oct.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

In this penetrating account of a series of journeys to Iran, Elliot reports on the "double life" of the Persians he meets, who unanimously denounce the ruling mullahs. One insists that you're nobody in Iran if you haven't been imprisoned; another rolls his eyes at the author's obsessive trawling of mosques, protesting, "People will think I'm with a fanatic." The book is replete with historical arcana (such as the second-century Parthian tactic of catapulting jars of bloodsucking flies at enemies), ruminations on the "turbulent calligraphies" of Islamic architecture, and labyrinthine footnotes that threaten to leap off into tomes of their own. Elliot is a travel writer of the old school: untethered to an itinerary, eager to be led astray, and as ardent an observer of the experience of travelling as of his destination. Copyright © 2006 Click here to subscribe to The New Yorker

No cosmopolitan musings about the relative merits of multiple swank laden hotels and resorts. No pointless stereotypical dwellings on the geo-politics of Saddam Hussein vs Khomeini. No histrionic rubbish about Thermopylae. Not a dull moment in the whole book. This book truly made me re-think the way I view my heritage as a kid of Iranian descent. All the dull crud my parents and grandparents mentioned suddenly emerged from the pages of Mr Elliot's book, burnished anew to a dazzling sheen. I cannot recommend this book more highly for its insight into Iranian culture and the Persian civilisation(s) on which it's built. Truly a timely and poetic read:)

I actually have not completed it yet. It's a bit of a crawl to me, but maybe it will get better. I am interested in the region and am willing to read it for that.

Excellent!

A very unbiased explorer of the nowadays Iran. Very true, very deep, very poetic writer. A must read

if you love art, history and people.

Excellent, interesting hearing from someone who actually put their foot on the ground and reported the good & the bad. From our news publications we obviously hear only one side of the story. It's this type of book that draws humanity together rather than expanding on the differences.

One of the best books on Iran aka Persia.

Not what I expected. I expected more of a commentary on ordinary peoples' views of the current political regime. Yes, the book does touch on that but it is mainly his interaction with the Tehran Intelligentsia and other well educated people in other cities. His historic overview of past dynasties and their contribution to culture and architecture was interesting but not what I was looking for. What does come across well is the hospitality and friendliness of the Iranian People.

Simply the best travel essays I've ever read! It's NOT a travel guide book for the very casual traveler. At times, it can be very in-depth, requiring a fair amount of general background knowledge not only of the history, art, architecture, literature and geography of Iran but also of the region and of Europe. But for the more casual reader, it can also provide a glimpse into the depth and richness of Iran, the part that has nothing to do with oil. For a more casual traveler, it can provide a general guide as to what things should be noticed while visiting even the usual tourist attractions or where to go if one wants to go a bit off the usual path. I have great respect for Mr. Elliot, his knowledge and his writing. My only minor complaint (in a lighthearted way) is how much he writes about haggling with taxi drivers and some merchants over money perhaps not realizing that most of it is also part of today's cultural complexities of Iran and indirectly a result of economic and political instabilities dominant in contemporary Iran. I know he was poor while traveling but sometimes he went out of his way to talk about what would've amounted to a dollar or two difference in a transaction. I have some good British friends and they all seem to be the same way!! :-)

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