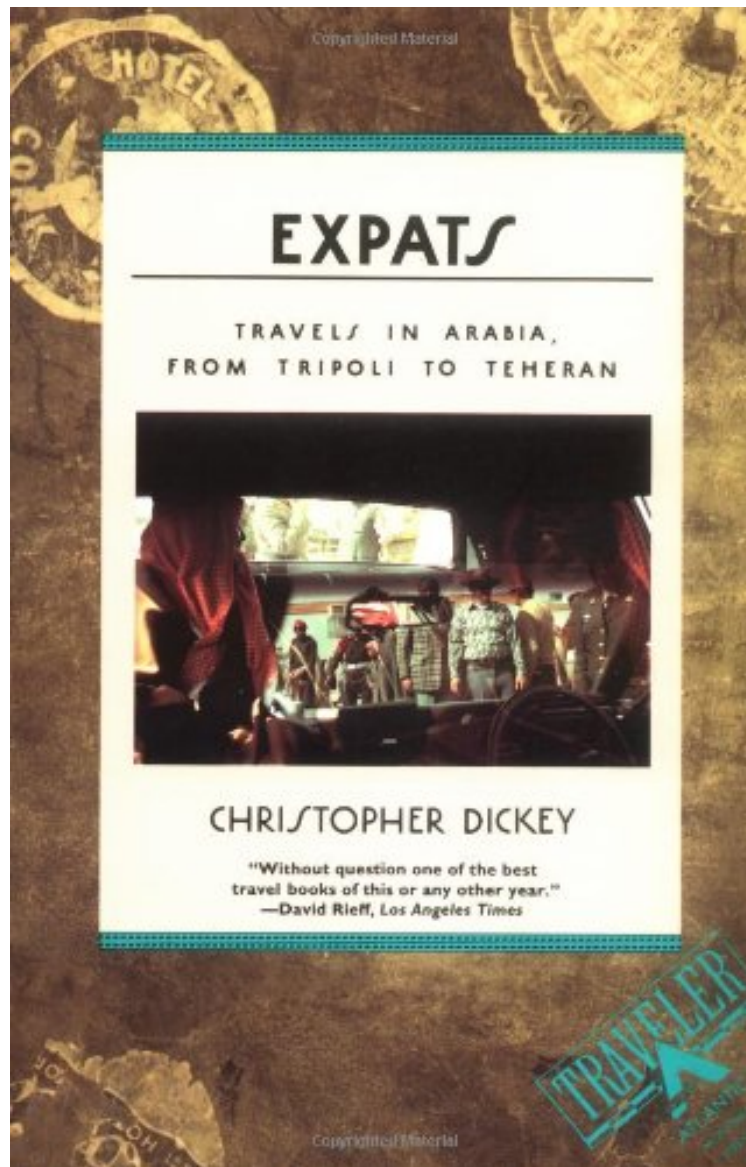


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Expats: Travels in Arabia, from Tripoli to Teheran

Christopher Dickey

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Christopher Dickey : Expats: Travels in Arabia, from Tripoli to Teheran before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Expats: Travels in Arabia, from Tripoli to Teheran:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Four Stars By Joan H. Exotic and great fun to read. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Illuminating reporting By Chris The author wrote for Newsweek as their Middle Eastern correspondent during the 1980s. Prior to that assignment he wrote on Latin America, the subject of his first book With the Contras. As one would imagine the episodic chapters center on expats working in the Middle East,

mostly in the oil business. Each chapter centers on a country; Libya, Oman, the gulf states, and Iran. The reporting in this book illuminated a time period that I didn't know too much about. For example, some of the chapters touch on the Iran-Iraq War. A war that I, and I think most Americans, know next to nothing about. I had no clue that so many civilian mariners died during the naval battles that raged between the two countries, not to mention the lives and ships lost to mines. The last chapter is the best. Dickey writes about an Iranian passenger jet, flying in Iranian airspace, that was shot down by a missile fired from a US warship in the Gulf. The plane had a civilian beacon and was in regular communication with air traffic controllers. After repeated requests for a visa, Dickey is conveniently granted entry to interview the family members of the victims. He comments that the Iranians were not angry at him personally or the American people in general. The author wonders aloud if Americans could or would make the same distinction if put in the same position. A few months after the plane crash, there was another, but this one was over Lockerbie, Scotland. Gaddafi claimed responsibility, but there is a good chance that the Iranian government was involved or at least encouraged Gaddafi. The screw-ups of our government DO consequences for civilians. 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Journalistic vignettes of the Middle East from the late '80's... By John P. Jones III Twenty years ago Christopher Dickey wrote some charming and interesting vignettes of life in the Middle East during the heady days of the oil boom, and long before the invention of the concept of a "Global War on Terror." Dickey's title is most indicative of the type of stories he writes; as opposed to many practitioners of "parachute journalism" who seem to be blissfully unaware of their inability to understand the country after a few days of meeting with officials well-versed in telling the journalist what he wants to hear. Dickey says the following: "But in fact, in countries where barriers of language and culture already exist and political and secret-police barriers are imposed, journalist and diplomats wind up talking mainly to each other." Given this key limitation, Dickey has produced some insightful stories of the expatriates ("expats"), mainly Western, who inhabit the region, from Libya to Iran, and who are either running from the law in their home countries, as legend has it, or have simply taken a quirky "career path." One key aspect of this book is the author's meetings with the quintessential explorer / "native" of the region, Wilfred Thesiger. He meets him in England and later follows-up on his visit to the UAE in the early '90's. He pushes Thesiger to the bounds of politeness of the issue of the total lack of women in his life, and in his reporting, and specifically asks him about Bin Kabina and Bin Ghabaisha, his two youthful companions who helped him cross the Empty Quarter in 1947, and of whom he took some evocative pictures. Yes, Thesiger proclaims, he did love them, but the love was not physical. Thesiger's account of this crossing is depicted in *Arabian Sands* (Penguin Classics)). Concerning T.E. Lawrence however, Dickey quotes Thesiger: "I think Lawrence was undoubtedly a homosexual. I mean, it emerges. But I think that in a sense one of his troubles was that he was a frustrated homosexual. Even with Daud or whoever it was I suspect that the relationship was never consummated and that Lawrence had a craving for a homosexual relationship, and the sore of thwarting of that may have contributed to his...uh... to his oddity." Dickey as a journalist does not draw any conclusions, but the reader is left to ponder how the "oddity" of both these men, and the widespread readership of their books, may have seriously distorted Western understanding of the region. For sure, there is much else. Dickey commences his book covering American expatriates who manage to live in Libya, serving the oil industry, despite American laws strictly forbidding it. He visits Dame Violet Dickson, when she was 91 years old. A British expatriate who had moved, with her husband, to Kuwait, in 1929, and has lived there successfully in a mud house ever since. This period was marked by the slaughter of the now increasingly forgotten Iran-Iraq war, and Dickey does a solid job on another forgotten incident of the war, when the USS Vincennes shot down the civilian airliner, Iran Air 655. Quoting one of his friends in the tower, who says: "Thank God, it was those bloody Iranians and not a real airplane with real people, it could have been British Air, or Pan Am or Singapore Airlines." That about says it all. There are at least several other incisive observations. Consider: "Arrival at the end of the earth is, of course, a subjective notion... The thing about the ends of the earth is that someone somewhere-usually in Langley, Virginia- will imagine they have strategic value." Concerning the alliance between Saudis and Texas oilmen, he quotes a Syrian woman who speaks three languages, noting the odd relationship, and the willingness of the Saudis to take up with people from "je ne sais quoi", Alabama. And concerning the expats themselves, who want to "get away from it all," but immediately re-create all the familiar trappings of "home" in their new surroundings, he quotes a "Daily Telegraph" correspondent who calls them "the cretinous flotsam of British society." Overall, a solid compendium of journalistic articles on the Middle East of 20 years ago, which are hampered only by the genre itself, and are therefore only impressionistic vignettes. 4-stars.

Award-winning Newsweek reporter Christopher Dickey offers an interesting look at the Arab world as seen through the eyes of some of the western expatriates--lost colonels and aging explorers, oilmen, sea captains, even retired spies--lingering in the Middle East.

From Library Journal Veteran journalist Dickey (With the Contras, LJ 3/1/86) traversed the Arab Middle East as Newsweek's bureau chief in Cairo in the last half of the Eighties, covering stories such as the American bombing of Libya, the disintegration of Lebanon, and more. Here, he draws on his experiences for a series of vignettes of

individuals he met. From an 80-year old legendary British explorer to oilmen and tanker captains, Soviet diplomats, and the Egyptian Nobel laureate for Literature (1988), Naguib Mahfouz, Dickey paints entertaining and insightful portraits. He writes with sympathy and telling detail about these individuals, depicting the human dimension of international crises and cultural change in the Arab East. Dickey leaves most of the political analysis to others like Thomas Friedman (From Beirut to Jerusalem, LJ 7/89). Readers will share Dickey's sentiments in his concluding confession, "the new world created by the juxtapositions of Arabia and America. . . had won me over ." A book for the general reader, this belongs on the shelves of all public libraries. For another American's view of Arabia, see Peter Theroux's Sandstorms: Days and Nights in Arabia, reviewed below.- James Rhodes, Luther Coll., Decorah, Ia. Copyright 1990 Reed Business Information, Inc.