



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

Christiane Bird

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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.

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