



Honeymoon in Purdah: An Iranian Journey

Alison Wearing

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With a love of travel, Alison Wearing invites us to journey with her to Iran--a country that few Westerners have a chance to see. Traveling with a male friend, in the guise of a couple on their honeymoon, Wearing set out on her own at every available opportunity. She went looking for what lay beneath the media's representation of Iran and found a country made up of welcoming, curious, warmhearted, ambitious men and women. With humor and compassion, Wearing gives Iranians the chance to wander beyond headlines and stereotypes, and in doing so, reveals the poetry of their lives--those whose lives extend beyond Western news stories of kidnapping, terrorism, veiled women, and Islamic fundamentalism.

Honeymoon in Purdah: An Iranian Journey Details

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Author : Alison Wearing

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From Reader Review Honeymoon in Purdah: An Iranian Journey for online ebook

Marie says

Set of travelogues about author's travels through Iran disguised as a honeymooning couple with her gay friend.

Lily says

This book was recommended to me by someone who shares similar reading tastes as myself - despite that this book was not very good. (I am surprised, on entering this, at the number of positive entries for this book. I did laugh at it being listed with: Travelogs of people who should get their head examined, since this is what I was thinking the entire time I was reading this book.)

I am not a fan of memoirs (or travelogs) - especially those that try to dress themselves up as something else, as this one does. The entire things felt very disjointed. The book apparently took place over months however the book is written as though it was days or weeks - leaving out huge gaps of information and detail. The writing did not appeal to me at all. It was like she thought up a creative and lovely paragraph and dropped it randomly on the page. If she had the power to sustain that type of writing the book may have been more entertaining. It also felt contrived - like she was hunting down this stuff to write about it - putting herself in potentially dangerous situations (like going off in a car with perfect strangers and not telling anyone she has even left) without a second thought or remorse. Finally, I thought she was absolutely awful to her traveling companion and very unfair to him even in the writing. I think he version of the story would have been far more interesting since he was the best part of the book.

If I had to recommend this book to anyone I would recommend it to someone who liked Three Cups of Tea (which I also really disliked, actually more so) since they feel very similar to me - while maybe he was not nearly as daft as this author and actually did some good.

Florence says

Apparently in post revolutionary Iran it is possible to rely on the kindness of strangers. Posing as husband and wife on their honeymoon, Alison Wearing and her unrelated male companion explored modern day Iran. They had only a few words of Farsi and she was weighted down with feminine garments designed to conceal her hair and her body from the male gaze. Ordinary people who they encountered on the street offered food, companionship, and lodging. The travelers were overwhelmed with kindness, interspersed with a couple of fearful moments. Lesson learned: never take a photo of a funeral procession comprised of wild-eyed religious mourners. But anyone with a smidgeon of cultural sensitivity would never do that. I was prepared to dislike these travelers but in the end I admired their gritty sense of adventure.

Unwisely says

Hey, let's pretend to be married, so we can go to Iran! This is not a thought I've ever had, but apparently this lady did. And I'm glad she did, it was a worthwhile read. I had read another woman-in-Iran book about a decade ago, but it was a journalist, and she didn't have a fake-husband, and it was way harder. (Aha! After about half an hour of googling I think it's Persian Mirrors: The Elusive Face of Iran. I remember liking it.)

The weird part is that she kept getting invited to people's houses (driven for hours, staying there for ages) without her "husband"; apparently having one was enough, the people usually didn't need to see him.

It's not 100% clear to me when she did this, but the book was published in 2000 and the Iranians kept referring to "Not Without My Daughter", which wikipedia tells me came out in 1991. (Man, this review is requiring a lot of research.) In any case, the Iranians depicted in the book are mostly generous and friendly. It almost makes me want to go visit. (And it definitely made me want pistachios and cherries.) Fun and interesting and strange.

Maggi says

I read this ages ago but just discovered Alison Wearing has a new book out. This travel memoir was one of my favorites-- not just travel books--but books.

Dovofthegalilee says

This book coupled with a few others I have read about Iran has really whetted my appetite to travel in this beautiful country but the likelihood of that ever happening is pretty slim. Although I only live one thousand miles away my country of Israel is seen as an enemy at least by the pariah government that continues to exist there.

This particular book was published in 2000 so the travel was a year's before that date and a lot has developed since then mostly negative from what I can see.

This book contained one particular dialogue with an imam that was so moving, at least for me I copied the pages and carry them in my pocket...I don't normally do that [pages 95-97].

Another important insight this author shared that has been backed up by other travel writers who have recorded their journeys is the fact that many Iranians despise what their country has become. The religious hold a death grip on the minority and many seem to want to escape, who can blame them? But this gets me thinking about horrible regimes that get's the masses to comply with such wickedness such as the Nazis or the Ayatollah. Why don't they rise up rather than becoming tools for their wickedness?

There's one thing that this book is that I can't forgive and that is the deceit. Had I known it from the out start I wouldn't have read it of course those three wonderful pages I mentioned would never have crossed my eyes but principles have to be adhered to if they truly are principles. One third into the book she reveals that her "husband" is actually a gay friend posing as her husband with forged papers. This is so selfish and wrong I don't know what else to say. She portrays so many people in this book as being kind and gracious and yet she deceives them. Would they have welcomed them into their homes if they knew the truth? We'll never know because they were not afforded that right. This behavior sums up this rising generation and their ways, they want to experience culture but they want it under their terms so did she really get to see Iran? She pretended to be someone who she was not – a married woman on her honeymoon and she received great

hospitality for being a liar.

It has many thought provoking topics in the book like the one I just shared and it is deserving of a read, I hope the author gets to see my comment and think about what she did .

Dolores says

This is absolutely one of the most unbiased, open-minded "outsider" views on modern-day Iran that I have ever had the pleasure of reading. Alison Wearing went into Iran with an open mind and an open heart, and a double dollop of tenacity and courage. She emerges a person who has viewed the country the news media doesn't want us to see. This is the country of total strangers who invite you to stay and dine at their house; of people who are concerned with whether you find the restrictions of their country pleasant or stifling; and, the story of other ex-patriots who have made their home in this land, and how they view it as outsiders who have become insiders, as much as possible.

There are fascinating stories in this book, including the author's day spent escaping the stifling heat of the city with nomads in the mountains, including a 12-year old girl who is married but unable to consummate the marriage since she hasn't finished puberty. In Shiraz, Wearing meets a British woman who is raising her teenaged daughter with her Iranian husband. She bemoans her nieces in England who are struggling with teenage pregnancies, while her daughter is getting straight A's and planning for college. Not every story is positive, including the incident on the bus to Syria, which raises Wearing's ire. But, people are people no matter where you go. And, the majority of people she meets are a far cry from what anyone would expect.

I highly recommend this book, and have loaned my copy to several people so far. It tells things I experienced as the wife of an Iranian in that country, but is even more interesting because Alison Wearing is truly viewing this world as an observer.

Rock Angel says

u wouldn't realize that she's totally insane until about 2/3 of the way into her tale -- clarity is overrated! She pulls you in w/o even trying.

I for one, would like to hear what her travel companion has to say about all this. I wouldn't mind, for example, to share a strong cup of tea to get the dirt!

On an unrelated note (2012 mar):

A movie "My Tehran for Sale (2009)" presented the modern cityscape of Tehran, visually and acoustically. It's a story loosely based on real events & i think I heard characters saying "merci" in their everyday conversation. There was good local music in the last 1/2 hr, incl the "Iranian Bob Dylan"? At least some of that good music was "underground", they say.

i tried to find out about poss French influence in Tehran but yielded nothin' except for its hand in Tehran

Metro in the 70's - 80's.

There were 2 scenes that impressed me in the movie: women's gossip in the waiting rm of a clinic reflecting their views on abortion, premarital pregnancies, may-september marriages and child brides .. (~0:56); and the scene of a six (?) year old neighbour girl comforting our protagonist after a boyfriend struck her just once. It stuck me that the young girl has seen this sort of domestic scenes before. I'm sure it's just me -- but the girl covered the woman with her tiny body, holding the older woman to provide comfort in a nurturing role. It begs the question: what happened? What has she seen before this?

There were a part that hint to a professor's (presumably monetary) offer in exchange for (presumably) sex, and then there was the storyline when our protagonist smuggled herself out of Iran across the border so that she could seek political asylum from Australia. The film didn't say which country she fled to.

I found this, but didn't answer my question:

<http://www.asiapacificfilms.net/persi...>

Overall, the struggles & endurance of our protagonist was lyrically laid out rather than documented. It was an ode to her friendship with her lady friend, and an ode to the struggles of a woman bravely living true to her heart in this city that mesmerizes foreigners. I did not find the movie very satisfying b/c it asked more questions than answered them. But I'm glad it gave me something to think about.

Sophia says

Posing as newlyweds on their honeymoon, Canadian Alison Wearing and a male friend make a five-month clockwise tour of Iran. Wearing's travelogue describes her experiences wearing the hijab and chador, but mostly her encounters with the Iranian people, recorded in *their* English. What I enjoyed most about the book was the vicarious experience of meeting such kind, excited, generous people, many of them random strangers inviting the foreign couple to their homes, showing them around town, or offering handfuls of food -- practicing the Persian custom of *ta'arouf*.

However, I couldn't help but be annoyed by the author-narrator. She admittedly lost a travel companion on a previous trip because she was too absorbed in a book. She and her "husband" don't get along on the trip. It seems like she did little to no research about Iran beforehand. Thus at times I couldn't help but feel they were a couple of Westerners mooching off the generosity of strangers, who would not reciprocate the hospitality back home. Wearing also has a tendency to give her impressions in sentence fragments, a stylistic choice which doesn't suit me.

But this book is still great as vicarious travel. It's not like I would be going on a honeymoon to Purdah anytime soon.

CynthiaA says

Set in the early 2000s, before 9/11 and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, this book tells of how a woman travels through Iran and the people she meets. Even though this book is categorized as a travel book, she doesn't tell you much, hardly anything about the places she sees in Iran. This is a story-- a series of stories

actually -- about people. How we are the same and how we are different. Extremely engaging and well done.

Petra CigareX says

Yet another book I read that is missing from my shelves. I don't think I reviewed it though as I read it probably in 2008/9. I have the book sitting in front of me. Why wouldn't I have listed it? I wish now I had kept all the .csv files of the bookshelves instead of the newest one replacing the last. However, since I started to notice books missing in June 2014, I've been keeping all the files.

It's really distressing the number of bug affecting the books right now. GR say they can't trace the bug or they are looking into it or something or other but nothing gets done.

These are the problems I have right now:

1. I am 'top reviewer' as I 'reviewed' 941 books last week. I didn't even reshelf that many when I set up a new shelf.
2. All books I reshelf or reviews I correct are sent to my update feed even though I am scrupulous about not having any boxes checked for this
3. Books and sometimes reviews just disappear. I only find out if something like I read someone's review and I know what book they are talking about because I've read it but it isn't on my shelves any longer.

Shelving books and reviewing them are at the heart of my experience on GR but all GR does these days is rush to think up yet more marketing features to place anywhere they can and then have soothing but mostly ineffectual threads on Feedback.

GR has degenerated so much since Amazon bought it out, not just that it has become a selling site where Patrick is intent that authors and their product, especially SPAs as their product costs Amazon nothing, it's all profit for them, will come first and us readers are just fish swimming around in a barrel. It seems to me that the only bugs that get fixed are ones that might affect this marketing. The others like this distressing losing of books and reviews and too many updates, they don't want to devote any money and time to fixing.

Rant over. For now.

Sean Howard says

One of the most wonderful books on Persian culture. It took my breath away and gave me a different view into Iran. It was recommended to me by the most beautiful man who used to run a persian restaurant in Kensington Market. He said it would "show me his country through the eyes of one who loves it." And he was right.

Jennifer says

Knowing very little essential about Iranian culture prior to this travel account, for me this was a compelling and informative read. I love that Wearing spends most of her writing painting pictures of the lives of those

she encountered rather than blathering on about herself. My chief objection to 'The Songlines' is that I never get past the first chapter of what I've been told is a very good read, because Chatwin won't just shut up already about the exact make of his pen, and how his leather-bound journal is just-so, and how he manfully strides his way through the tough, forbidding land of Australia because he is such an amazing guy - blech. Not so with Alison Wearing's travel writing. She wisely realizes that we're not reading all about how cool Alison is traveling through Iran; we want to know what she saw, and who she talked to, and, sure, what she thought about such things, but not in a self-absorbed and egotistical manner.

Because much of this book lulls you into a feeling of "Wow! Iran is bursting with kind-hearted, generous people who just want to share tea and stories with you!", the ending is particularly effective for its cold-water reality shock. The one sudden instance of violence goes much farther in reminding the reader that there are reasons why western societies often feel so at odds with the Iranian culture than a whole diatribe of vitriolic writing cataloging injustices both done to and by the Iranian people.

Michelle Wallace says

Excellent book. Shows all the beautiful, wonderful people of Iran that we don't otherwise get to see.

Lynne says

I LOVED this book. Alison Wearing was able to bring humour to her travels around Iran. Through her narration we were introduced to kind, lovely people who opened their homes to these honeymooners and who through their stories brought a humanity and beauty to a country that often gets the short end of the stick. I particularly enjoyed the fact that this book, unlike to many other travel memoirs, was more about the people met, rather than the traveler. It wasn't about Alison's reaction to meeting these people - it was about what happened, how they acted and normally, the hilarious outcomes. A great read for anyone who enjoys memoirs.
