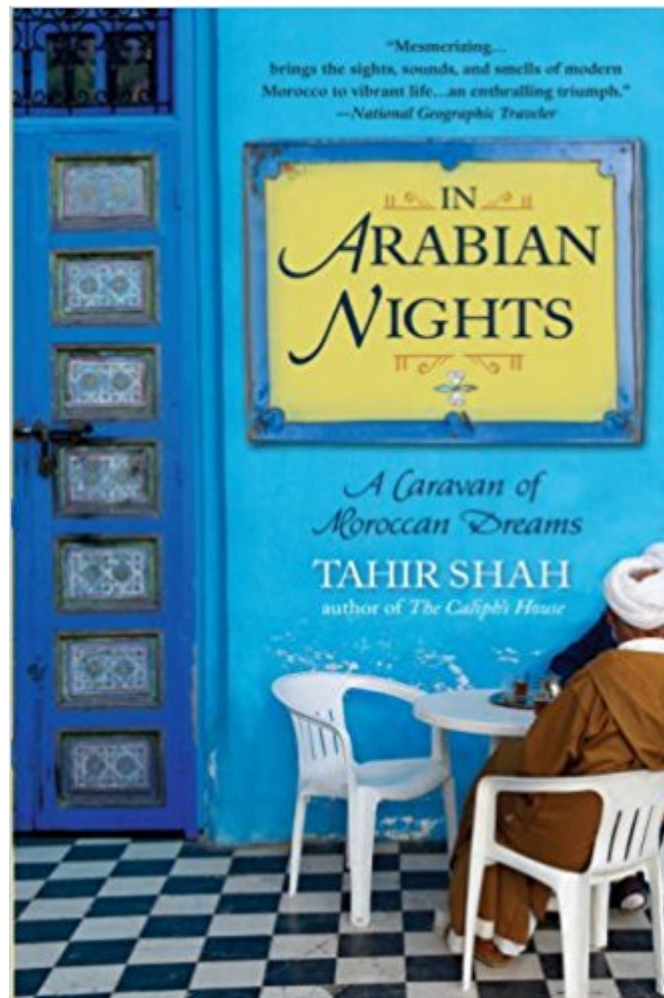




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# In Arabian Nights: A Caravan Of Moroccan Dreams



## Synopsis

Named one of Time magazine's Ten Best Books of the Year, Tahir Shah's *The Caliph's House* was hailed by critics and compared to such travel classics as *A Year in Provence* and *Under the Tuscan Sun*. Now Shah takes us deeper into the real Casablanca to uncover mysteries hidden for centuries from Western eyes. In this entertaining jewel of a book, Tahir Shah sets off across Morocco on a bold new adventure worthy of the mythical *Arabian Nights*. As he wends his way through the labyrinthine medinas of Fez and Marrakech, traverses the Sahara sands, and samples the hospitality of ordinary Moroccans, Tahir collects a dazzling treasury of traditional wisdom stories, gleaned from the heritage of *A Thousand and One Nights*, which open the doors to layers of culture most visitors hardly realize exist. From master masons who labor only at night to Sufi wise men who write for soap operas, *In Arabian Nights* takes us on an unforgettable, offbeat, and utterly enchanted journey.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Shah continues the story he began in his acclaimed memoir *The Caliph's House*, the tale of his family's move to Morocco, this time focusing on the traditional wisdom stories of Arabia, best known in the West through *A Thousand and One Nights*. Inspired by his family's long tradition of storytelling ("We have this gift," says his father, "Protect it and it will protect you"), Shah frames his search for identity with traditional Arabian tales, but also with the stories of the men who tell them. As such, he creates a bright patchwork quilt of stories old and new, including his own childhood memories, held together by an engaging cross-country travelogue. Shah's habit of frequently and

abruptly switching between plotlines, though it keeps the story moving, can be aggravating, and his picaresque style makes it hard to tell where the real adventures end and the tall tales begin. In addition, women are conspicuously underrepresented, especially for audiences recalling Scheherazade. Still, his characters often prove charming, and his stories are steeped in feeling and a palpable sense of tradition. Illustrations. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

“Intensely felt. Teeming with sorcerers, enchanted animals, jinns, and dervishes. Shah’s Moroccans and the shards of their tales create a brilliant literary mosaic.” •Booklist “Creates moments of wonderment.... And worthy of note, especially in these times, is its illumination of a part of Arabic culture that is gracious, gentle and wise.” •Cleveland Plain Dealer “A spellbinding journey from Casablanca to Fez and Marrakech |unforgettable | Highly recommended for larger armchair travel collections and for collections on the Arab world.” •Library Journal “Simply irresistible |bursts with quirky characters, Moroccan lore, desert and urban landscapes, odd encounters, an incisively curious and adventure-seeking mind, and a lust for and fascination with ancient tales.” • Providence Journal “Mesmerizing |brings the sights, sounds, and smells of modern Morocco to vibrant life |an enthralling triumph.” •National Geographic Traveler

I’m a new fan of Tahir Shah, this being the third book of his I’ve read. This is my favorite, so far, and I think it will remain so because of the subtlety and depth of the topic: storytelling. I realized reading this that I already know the story in my heart, and it is very similar to his. It is about coming home and finally understanding the place . . . or at least realizing that the place is worth trying to understand in some mysterious and ancient way. It is about seeing without images and hearing without words.

In Arabian Nights is a wide-open window into another world, but only because Tahir Shah draws us into himself. He writes with complete honesty, showing in his prose his many questions regarding the acts of life. He is a storyteller, but that does not reflect in his book as a simple story, for the book is much more complicated--and simple--than that. The streams of his story flow merrily only to disappear beneath the sands of some trauma (or jinn); but they bubble up again and again if you wait for them. He is a storyteller in search of the story in his heart. In the process of looking for that

story, he sifts through the stories around him as well as the one he is living, and looks at each...weighing it...trying to know it. It is his awareness that he is participating in a story that makes the book so precious. As a storyteller myself, I admire Tahir Shah's metacognitive frankness, his knowledge of story, and his awareness of the stories pressing against him from both within and without. As someone who has been to Marrakesh, he brought back to me the taste of the tepid water from goatskin bags...and it makes me smile. Like the stories of Joha (Nasrudin), you can read this book on a number of different levels. But if you choose to dive deep, there is much for the soul and the intellect to revel in.

I liked this one even better than the Caliph's House! This book is an homage to Tahir's father, and it's a beautiful homage. I loved the Berber idea of finding the story in your heart and that Tahir Shah actually took that on literally and went to search for his story. The cast of characters he meets along the way are terrific. I badly wished I understood Arabic while I was in Marrakech as I would have loved to join the circles of storytellers in the medina at night. At least I knew what they were doing, only because I read this book. The stories told in this book were also much easier to read than the original Arabian Nights and I appreciated that fact very much.

This book reminded me of my grandmother who used to tell us stories, as well and though she repeated them, they took a new meaning each time she told or retold them. A wonderful book, full of surprises, opening the beautiful world of Morocco and its people and at the same time giving us the beauty and depth of the Afghan culture, that of hospitality, and honor through the authors description of his father and grandfather. It is a book that is truly beautiful and brings the art of storytelling, its history and importance to the fore. Through this book, one "remembers" yet again, that art, which is worthy of preservation and handing down to the generations ahead of us. Looking forward to more books from Tahir Shah.

This book was the perfect book to read on my trip to Morocco! Several of my friends on the same trip downloaded it ...and enjoyed it along with me. A great read...seems everyday it was where I was or "that just happened"!

This is an excellent book, which I devoured in less than a week and will read again and again and again. However, a correction is in order here. One of the past reviewers (who did not like the book) wrote - and I quote: "The book is a journey about a story - every person has a story that is close to

his or her heart. Finding that story is the hard part. Mr. Shah does indeed find the story, but guess what? The reader has no idea what it was!" Were we both reading the same book? Reader, do not be put off by such a remark. This book is not about a wild goose chase. Mr Shah does indeed find the story close to his heart and even has physical reactions and symptoms that indicate this story is the right one. Please read the book carefully -- it's there in black and white!! I must admit I did find the characters' names a bit daunting and confusing. Without knowledge of Arabic, it was difficult to tell the characters apart by name only... A future edition of this wonderful book would benefit greatly by the addition of a Character List at the front, designed especially for Western readers, as is often found in Russian novels such as War and Peace or Dr. Zhivago. Publishers, please take note!

Author Tahir Shah once again catches us in that magical moment where we suspend all disbelief and absorb the delicious details of a good story. Starting with his illegal imprisonment in Pakistan and quickly shifting back to Morocco, his adventures and challenges, discoveries and experiences are shared in vibrant detail. Pen sketches enchant us as we wander through our imagination. Highly recommend this read for all expats preparing to visit or move to Morocco, all readers who love a good story, and all those seeking a little twinkle of delight in their lives.

Tahir Shah describes the people, places, passions, and stories of Morocco as he lives and travels there. He is on a mission to collect and preserve the stories people tell as well as find his own story. He succeeds at both, and passes them along to us as well. Teaching and learning in that region of the world are accomplished by storytelling, and has been so for millenium. Think Jesus and Mohammed -- both great storytellers -- used it as a way of teaching. I am looking forward to re-visiting Marrakesh and Casablanca, and to visiting Fez, Tangier and Chefchaoun. I wonder why he omitted Rabat; maybe he covered it in The Caliph's House. I am looking forward to that one now, too. Shah has a style of writing that I had to adjust and settle into, but when I did, I realized how it truly captured the pace of the Moroccan people and how authentic it felt.

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