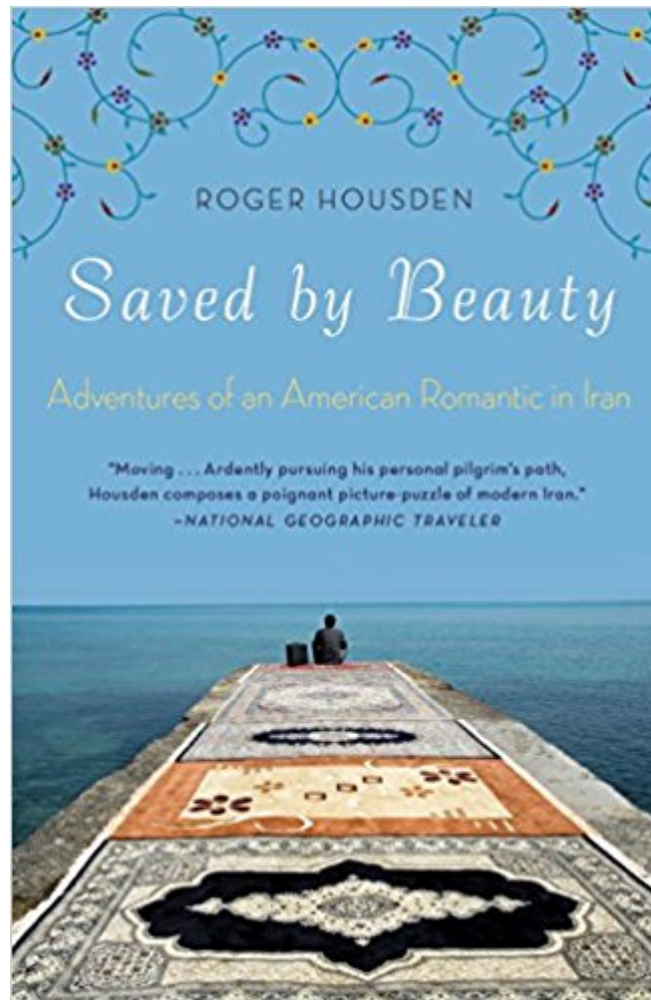




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Saved By Beauty: Adventures Of An American Romantic In Iran



Synopsis

When Roger Housden decided to travel to Iran and finally see the subject of his youthful fascination, he was in his sixties. By then, he thought he had seen the world. He was wrong. It was a quest that changed him forever. In Iran, Housden met with artists, writers, film makers and religious scholars who embody the long Iranian tradition of humanism, and shared with him their belief in scholarship and artistry. From the bustle of modern Tehran to the paradise gardens of Shiraz to the spectacular mosques and ancient palaces of Isfahan, Housden met Iranians who were warm, welcoming, generous, intellectually curious, and altogether alive with their love for one another, and for the faith and tradition that holds them together. *Saved by Beauty* weaves a richly textured story of many threads. It is a deeply poetic and perceptive appreciation of a culture that has endured for over three thousand years, while it also portrays the creative and spiritual cultures within contemporary Iran. While there, Roger Housden was brought face to face with the reality that beauty and truth, deceit and violence, are inextricably mingled in the affairs of human life, and was forever altered by it.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Starred Review. As a young man, British-American author Housden (*Chasing Rumi*) found himself drawn to Iran—its poetry, music, and even the signature blue color of its mosques, but only in his 60s was he able to visit the country and attempt to unlock its secrets. "The image of Iran as a dark and scary place," writes Housden, "remains a difficult one to dislodge from the collective imagination." "I wanted to see if the Iran of today could give substance and value to the

images I had cherished for decades." A lyrical panorama of contemporary Persian politics and culture, this book gives contour and nuance to our idea of Iran, and introduces us to complex, very memorable characters—from the artists who refuse to live elsewhere, despite governmental limitations, to the poetry-quoting intelligence agents who threaten the author with prison. (May) (c) Copyright PWxyz, LLC. All rights reserved. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

"Both readers new to Housden and fans of his poetry will treasure this memorable account of what may be a once-in-a-lifetime trip. Even better, his insights are also sure to inform and maybe even re-form preconceived notions many hold about Iran. It is impossible not to lose oneself in Housden's many-faceted narrative." — •Booklist, starred review

"A lyrical panorama of contemporary Persian politics and culture, this book gives contour and nuance to our idea of Iran, and introduces us to complex, very memorable characters." — •Publishers Weekly, starred review

"The eloquent account of a Western poet's encounters with the land, culture and people of Iran...soulful and uplifting." — •Kirkus Reviews

"Movingly, ardently pursuing his personal pilgrim's path, Housden composes a poignant picture-puzzle of modern Iran." — National Geographic Traveler

From the Hardcover edition.

This is a story of the author's trip to Iran, a dream from adolescence, to see the land of the Persian poets and the great gardens and magnificent mosques and to meet with the clerics, sheiks and leaders of minority faiths, like Sufi and Zoroasterian, to uncover the many anomalies that represent Iran, the conflicts between the rulers and the way the general artistic population lives, the compromises citizens make to find a place of expression and creativity..and the hopes of the younger population. The Iranian population is very pro-American, as was once the population of Iraq, they were two of the only Middle Eastern countries whose average citizen loved Americans, in spite of the despots that rule them. Iran's culture which goes back thousands of years has the patience to survive any government, and the love of their country, culture, heroes and poets give most Iranians hope for a future where beauty and friendship will be the future.

Mr. Housden should have spent more time researching Iran before he journeyed there because he makes a few basic and embarrassing errors about the country and culture. His delight in his Iranian sojourn is, however, infectious, and if you prefer literary to real travel, this book will take you to a far and exotic destination that you won't regret visiting.

I enjoyed this book, a great insight into Persia. I only wish Roger would have done like one of his Iranian friends suggested was to spend some time out among the Bedions instead of fixating on Persian cultural sites and hanging out with artists and intellectuals.

This book is pleasant enough, but it never really grabbed me. There are descriptions of people and places and experiences the author has, but I kept waiting for something to really shine, a special moment, or an observation that really moved me, and it never really came. It was a good taste of Modern Iran, but not what I was looking for.

This is a timely addition to the recently published books regarding relations between the US and Iran. It is a realist's view of a people with historical and emototional ties to the US. It should be included in the reading material recommended for the statespeople responsible for managing this relationship. At a time when both sides have legitimate claims on grievances resulting from their behavior during the recent past, a book aimed at healing is timely and appropriate. As a sort of travel book, it is surprisingly a fast read and a page turner. I highly recommend the book.

I loved this book. This man is a philosopher as well as a poet. I was very moved by the chapter on Persepolis, and having been to Isfahan in 1973 knew exactly where and what he was referring to and Whetted my appetite to return. His meetings with prominent artists and film makers as well as the women of Iran was an eye opener. . It is wonderful to travel with someone who isn't afraid to reach out and touch the soul of a place and its people. Thanks Roger, look forward to your next trip.

Outstanding very readable guide to Iranian culture by an English writer.

As a lover of travel literature, I recently came across Roger Housden's *Saved By Beauty* in my favorite used bookstore, and immediately opened the book the moment I arrived home. This memoir of Roger's meanderings from city to city uncovering the true heart of Iran's people and culture left me in awe. From Tehran to Tabriz, from Shiraz to Isfahan, from the heart of the ancient ruins of Persepolis, to dusty deserts and mountain citadels, Housden's ability to evoke the beauty and integrity of Iran's soul pours out in poetic and heartfelt prose. Meeting people of all walks of life, merchants, muezzins, politicians and poets, readers will become thoroughly engulfed in Iranian history, myth, religious beliefs and current affairs amidst its people young and old. As Roger navigates through the snaking streets of merchant bazaars, and gracefully steps into the serene yet

vibrant spirit of Iran's infamous blue mosques, he surrounds the reader and himself with the lore and legend and the people that live in the heart of the Middle East. As the reader of this wonderful armchair travel gem, you are sure to feel the intricately woven carpets beneath your feet, smell the spices of the open-air market place, hear the jingle of bells, and the call of prayer from every steeped minaret. Housden shows us the appreciation and dedication to surrounding their lives with beauty as only the Iranians can. Once known as Persia, Iran's history that travels back in time to the era before Christ, is rich in a world of renowned poets such as Rumi and Hafez, intriguing mystics, ruling shahs that had foresight into philosophy way ahead of their time, musicians and scholars, and a country full of people that still today live moment to moment believing in their ability to treasure each day as it comes and that following the values and beliefs of the ancient Persians is what makes their culture and country strong. Roger introduces you to many people along his way that all believe in their hearts that although their political and religious ways can be often prohibitive to a modern way of life, their roots and hearts belong to the soil of Iran. Many of their young leave for American or European soil, but most eventually return back to the Persian way of life that is deeply embedded in their blood. Housden is a fine journalist with an incredible ability to make you feel at home in this land of veiled women and blue domed architecture. You will feel you are right beside him bumping along in a jeep crossing the desert, and will feel his enthusiasm as his heart swells each time he comes across a little piece of beauty whether it be a poem, a song, or a painted ceramic bowl. Come along to one of the most luscious countries of the Middle East. Learn for yourself that not all of what our media tells us is all there is to know. Not all people from the Middle East are hell-bent on religious jihad wars, suicide bombings, or are all terrorists. This book opened my eyes to the Persian people and I found nothing but wonder to behold. Five stars for an enchanting tale told with honesty, humor, and faith that all people everywhere are beautiful, vibrant, and enduring.

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