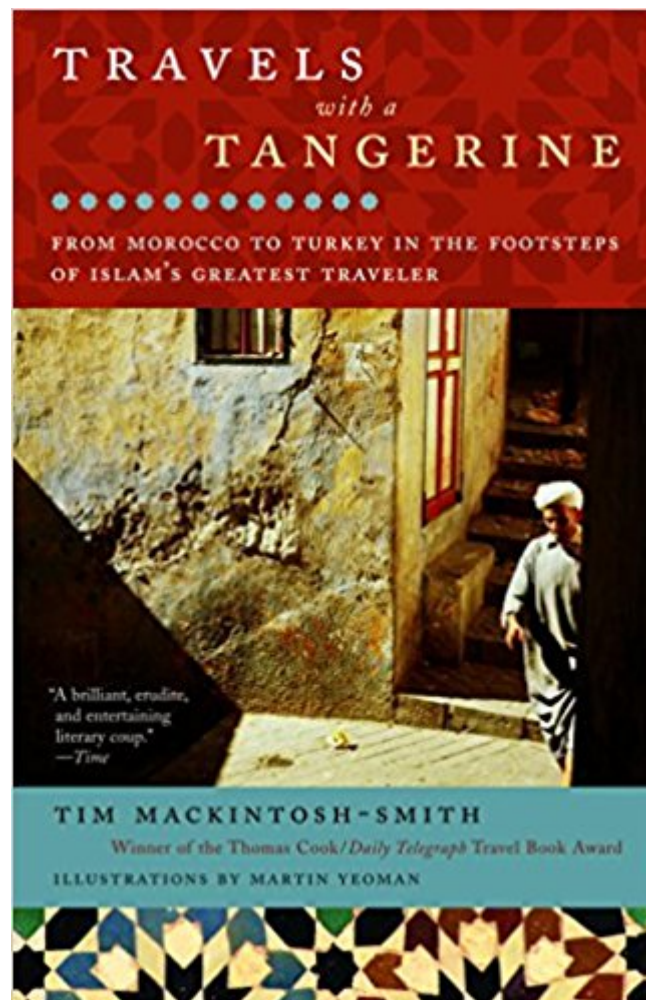




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# Travels With A Tangerine: From Morocco To Turkey In The Footsteps Of Islam's Greatest Traveler



## Synopsis

In 1325, the great Arab traveler Ibn Battutah set out from his native Tangier in North Africa on pilgrimage to Mecca. By the time he returned nearly thirty years later, he had seen most of the known world, covering three times the distance allegedly traveled by the great Venetian explorer Marco Polo—some 75,000 miles in all. Captivated by Ibn Battutah's account of his journey, the Arabic scholar and award-winning travel writer Tim Mackintosh-Smith set out to follow in the peripatetic Moroccan's footsteps. Traversing Egyptian deserts and remote islands in the Arabian Sea, visiting castles in Syria and innumerable souks in medieval Islam's great cities, Mackintosh-Smith sought clues to Ibn Battutah's life and times, encountering the ghost of Ibn Battutah in everything from place names (in Tangier alone, a hotel, street, airport, and ferry bear Ibn Battutah's name), to dietary staples to an Arabic online dating service—and introducing us to a world of unimaginable wonders. By necessity, Mackintosh-Smith's journey may have cut some corners (I can only wish I had the odd thirty years to spare, and Ibn Battutah's enviable knack of extracting large amounts of cash, robes and slaves from compliant rulers.) But in this wry, evocative, and uniquely engaging travelogue, he spares no effort in giving readers an unforgettable glimpse into both the present-day and fourteenth-century Islamic worlds.

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## Customer Reviews

The author (Yemen: The Unknown Arabia), a British Arabist who has lived in Yemen for the past 17 years, traces the footsteps of an extraordinary, but relatively unknown, medieval explorer. Ibn Battutah (1304-1368) grew up in Tangier within an educated family. At the age of 21, he embarked

on a pilgrimage to Mecca and spent the next 30 years traveling throughout the Middle and Far East. When Mackintosh-Smith happened on a translated version of Battutah's travels, he was hooked and decided to make the same journey. This volume covers only the first part of Battutah's path, from Tangier to Constantinople, but has enough excitement, exotic details and information to satisfy the most exacting armchair traveler. The author brings his research skills, scholarship and respect for all cultures to bear on Battutah's adventures and his own. Written with humor and style, he describes how Battutah "schmoozed with sultans" in Denizli, Turkey. In Damascus, the author enjoys a brain burger for breakfast before visiting the Umayyad Mosque, a structure Battutah detailed in 10 pages and referred to as "the greatest Mosque on earth." Throughout this narrative, Mackintosh-Smith provides enough anecdotes about Battutah's knowledge of aphrodisiacs, the foods he ate, the hardships he endured, the people he met and, most tellingly, the wonders he beheld to bring this unique daredevil and his times to life. B&w illus. Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

In 1325, great Moroccan traveler Ibn Battutah set out on a 29-year pilgrimage from his native Tangiers to Mecca. In this studious and charming account, Arabic scholar Mackintosh-Smith, Thomas Cook Travel Book Award winner for *Yemen: Travels in Dictionary Land*, attempts to retrace Ibn Battutah's route on the first stage of his legendary journey, cutting a wide swath from Tangiers to Constantinople via Egypt, Syria, Oman, Anatolia, and the Crimea. Mecca, which is verboten to the non-Muslim author, is not included. Mackintosh-Smith writes with a delectable wit, offering a fascinating glimpse into both the present-day and 14th-century Islamic worlds. He makes his experiences intelligible to the Western reader with numerous allusions, e.g., "Ibn Battutah was born not just in a medieval Age of Aquarius, but in its California." This captivating travel narrative may spur readers to tackle the original travels of Ibn Battutah. Recommended for all collections. Ravi Shenoy, Naperville P.L., IL Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Tim Mackintosh-Smith's entertaining and informative travelogue recounts his attempt to duplicate the first part of the travels of the great Islamic traveller Ibn Batutta. He starts in Morocco, travels across North Africa to Egypt, then to the Middle East in modern Saudi Arabia and Jordan. He then travel to the coast of the Persian Gulf to modern Oman, and finally back up through Turkey and onto the Crimea peninsula. Overall, I found this to be a very informative read, but not easy and not that entertaining. You'll learn a tremendous amount about the diversity of the people who inhabit the

Islamic world: their cultures, their religion, their cuisine. Each region has a tremendous amount of local history, and to sweep this all under the rug as 'Islamic' history is a tremendous disservice. TMS's book will, if nothing else, demonstrate the enormous diversity in the Islamic world - this alone is worth the price of admission for someone like me who has never visited Egypt, Jordan, etc. TMS also meets many friendly and not so friendly people along the way that spice up his travels. However, this book is a tough slog - it is almost too clever for its own good. One can only read about so many Islamic saints and shrines, after a while they all start to blend together. There is so much minutiae in this book that sometimes TMS loses the larger picture for the trees in the forest. He certainly didn't encourage me to repeat this journey, and there is no way that this can be considered an easy read - it definitely took discipline on my part to finish the book. The few times that TMS tries to inject humor into the tale of his travels, it is always in the form of body function humor - a bit scatological for an otherwise clever travelogue. The bottom line is that there is a lot to like about this journey, but it is too wordy and eclectic for its own good, and I'd be wary about recommending it to anyone. I think the glowing 5 star reviews overrate this somewhat, and you should think carefully before taking the plunge.

A retracing of some of the journeys (Morocco, Egypt, Syria, Southern Arabia, the Kuria Muria Islands, Turkey and the Crimea) of the fourteenth century traveller, Ibn Battuta. The author is a British born and educated Yemen resident, fluent in classical and colloquial Arabic and deeply learned in history and music. The book contains quotations in French, German, Russian (in the Cyrillic alphabet), Turkish and Greek. I thought I'd caught him misquoting Pliny, but then realized he was making a Latin joke. Some of his polyglot puns are outrageous. In The Umayyad mosque in Damascus he found Ismailis and Shiites at prayer, but that the orthodox were keeping the Sunni side up. The long digressions on obscure Arab writers and religious teachers and the intrusive parade of erudition might put some people off. It's a bit like reading Umberto Eco where some readers, such as myself, get entranced by the writer's flattering assumption that we are as clever as he is. He travelled rough and travelled alone. He explains at one point that he cannot marry because he is an "ah, orientalist." He shows much interest in, and sympathy with, the Moslem religion but I got the impression that, like his fellow orientalist, TE Lawrence, he likes Arabs best if they are poor and rural, a faintly patronizing attitude.

Wonderfully written adventure, chocked full of erudite assessments and delicate moments of brilliant insight. A sensitive portrait of Ibn Battuta the man and sweeping look at Arabic the language.

Thanks Tim!

I've spent some time in Tangier, where Ibn Battutah is still a well-known name after a lot of centuries, and was happy to see that someone had produced a new look in English on the subject. Regrettably, the focus of this effort is more on the author, Timothy Macintosh-Smith himself than on the intrepid traveler Ibn Battutah. I've no doubt that Mackintosh-Smith is a well-educated and experienced Arabist, but his writing style in this short book is not only stilted and pretentious, it's frequently closeminded and (to my mind) unfair to the alleged subject. There are occasional insights worth having here, but overall, this is not a book that I would recommend.

A nice book to settle in with, if you have time to think about it's contents.

This book had been sitting on my 'to read' shelf for a couple of years: I didn't think it would be particularly interesting. When I determinedly sat down to read it, I realised what I'd been missing as this is travel writing at its absolutely superb best. In it the author - an Arabist and longterm Yemeni resident - seeks to follow the travels of 14th century Moroccan traveller Ibn Battutah, a man who over twenty-nine years visited "over forty countries on the modern map, travelling some 75,000 miles by horse, mule, camel, ox-wagon, junk, dhow, raft and on foot." With Battutah's 'Travels' ever in hand, the author re-discovers shrines, mosques and churches and finds similarities - and vast differences - in the lifestyle of the people he meets on the way. This, the first volume, covers Morocco, Egypt, Syria, Oman, Turkey and the Crimea. Mr Mackintosh-Smith writes wonderful descriptions, both witty and intelligent; he peppers his work with tales taken from Battutah and elsewhere; he draws us in to his one-man archaeological efforts as he seeks to identify places mentioned in the work. And the reader experiences a thrill as he conclusively identifies a location where Battutah himself would have stood so long ago. This is a wonderful read and I hope to go on and read the other two volumes.

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