



Between Terror and Tourism: An Overland Journey Across North Africa

Michael Mewshaw

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For his 65th birthday, acclaimed novelist Michael Mewshaw took a 4,000-mile overland trip across North Africa. Arriving in Egypt during food riots, he heads west into Libya, where billions in oil money have produced little except citizens eager to flee to Europe or join the jihad in Iraq. In Tunis, Mewshaw visits an abandoned *Star Wars* movie set where Al Qaeda has just kidnapped two tourists.

Ignoring U.S. Embassy warnings he crosses into Algeria, traveling through mountain towns and seething metropolises where 200,000 people have died during more than a decade of sectarian violence. Searching for the tombs of seven monks murdered by Islamic fundamentalists, he reaches a village where six more people have been beheaded the day before. When he interviews a repentant terrorist responsible for 5,000 deaths, the man praises the Boy Scouts for training him.

By contrast, the Moroccan city of Tangier seems almost tame. But then he meets the last literary protégé of Paul Bowles who accuses Bowles of plagiarism and murder. In the end, the reader, like the author, is immersed in a fascinating adventure that's sometimes tragic, often funny, occasionally terrifying and always a revelation of a strange place and its people.

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