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Lonely Planet Libya



Synopsis

Covering the splendours of the Sahara, from rock art, isolated lakes, mud-brick towns and magnificent sand dunes, this book is the ideal companion for travel to the country. Contains a special section on Roman and Greek ruins along the Mediterranean coast, as well as a historical and cultural overview for in-flight reading.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Lonely Planet quality! Always good

Libya is not a country yet used to having many visitors from the western world (with the possible exception of Italians) so visitors should not expect too much in terms of five star comforts - or at least not yet as things are already beginning to change. It is a place well worth visiting however and this guide is very helpful in both planning your trip and finding your way around. One of the greatest tourist assets this country has are the remarkable Roman and Greek ruins at various sites throughout the country - in particular the spectacular Greek ruins at Cyrene in the east of the country. (These make the acropolis of Athens look pathetic by comparison). The outlines and maps provided by Lonely Planet of these archeological sites proved accurate and helpful and allowed us to get much more out of guided tours than we could have otherwise. The guide proved remarkably accurate in assessment of the quality of hotels, restaurants and sites to visit. So much so that our Libyan guide from one of the local tour companies was delighted when we gave him our copy at the

airport on our departure. It should be noted that the authors have a somewhat rosey view of things - they don't mention the fact that a lot of litter is strewn throughout the country, a lot of people are not especially friendly (though many are) but they are right in pointing out that it is a relatively safe place to visit. All in all a smart investment for anyone visiting the country.

THIS IS AN EXCELLENT BOOK. To get a vivid sense of what it was like to live in Libya in the early 1980s read DIS-SHELTER OF BEING by Hermann Pommern. The entire central section of this book of poems offers a reflection on the classical Libya of the Roman Empire, as well as accounts of living in the Libya of Kaddaffi's time.

By all means, this Lonely Planet guide is an extremely useful tool for those travelling in Libya, and is probably the best guidebook about the country. The author and editors have put some great work into it, resulting in an excellent achievement in terms of overall coverage and book's presentation. Few other Lonely Planet guides are as interesting and fascinating to read as this one, so filled with thrilling information on history and culture, with great anecdotes and stories about Libya's wonders. But the problem is, exactly, that this guidebook is too filled with Libya's alleged 'wonders', making Libya truly appear a real dream-country for the visitor - which, very arguably, it is not. So, if you have already made your mind about going to Libya, by all means you should take this book with you. But if you are tempted to visit Libya mainly because you have been enchanted by this book, as might indeed happen given the book's excellent prose and contents, then you should think twice. The author seems to have made great friends in Libya and have enjoyed the country greatly, and I am glad for him. But please do note: Libya is far from being a pleasant place filled with "the most pleasant people on Earth" (book's wording). I have so far been to 155 sovereign nations, and to my chagrin I am sorry to say that I have found no other place on Earth as harsh, boring and outright tedious as Libya - I enjoyed Somalia, Sierra Leone and Kosovo far more ! If you are looking for Arabic warmth, Morocco or Tunisia are a much better bet. If you are looking for desert, you have a whole half-continent to consider, including nearby Algeria. If you wish to go somewhere 'new', maybe try Cuba or Iran. And I don't see why would one bother with Libya's ancient Roman ruins, since Italy is just opposite, on the other side of the Mediterranean. And if Libya fascinates you because of its alleged dangers and novelty, plenty of other alternatives exist, from Syria to Yemen. As regards the people too, I have not had the pleasant experiences which the guidebook seems to guarantee: without wishing to stereotype a whole people, I must say that I have found a great deal of arrogant, cheating, rude and inhospitable people among Libyans. Therefore my advice simply is:

please take this book's positive words very cautiously. Many inaccuracies or misrepresentations are also contained in the book. The whole range of Tripoli's top-end hotels (allegedly 5-stars), listed very positively in the book, are in reality no more than low 3-stars properties with appallingly low or inexistent customer service. Some of the restaurants listed simply don't exist, or are horribly disappointing compared to the book's description. The whole procedure of getting a visa is described in the book in a way that makes it seem complex and lawyerly, while in reality I was able to get a visa very straight-forward, and was amazed by the lack of bureaucracy encountered along the process. Having said all this, thereby placing this book below the excellent standard usually offered by Lonely Planet, the book is indeed a great achievement in terms of coverage of the whole nation. In a region so hard to get to know, the author has been able to cover small towns and villages, albeit with errors, in a way that is amazing and wonderful. And as mentioned previously, the book is so rich with facts about Libya, that it makes fascinating reading, by all means great for the armchair traveller, and for those wishing to dream of a wonderful Libya. Indeed, I wish Libya were really as the author describes it...

Without having read the book, I can fully agree with Mr. Giuliano's review because I've lived in Tripoli for one year. Libya is all that Mr. Giuliano has written about and more. Streets strewn with plastic bags of all sizes and ages (yes, plastic doesn't seem to rot!), Libyans trying and sometimes succeeding in tricking and cheating you, a total lack of any restaurant that resembles a restaurant. The only place I ever ate at was in a foreigners' camp and most of the time I had Yalla (Montezuma's Revenge) shortly thereafter. Unfortunately I have few fond memories that I have taken with me. I have lived in many countries, some comparable to Libya, but none has left me more disgusted and disappointed than Libya and its hypocrisy. Without the plastic bags and rotting cans, I am sure it could be a beautiful place. I just wasn't shown the pretty places.

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