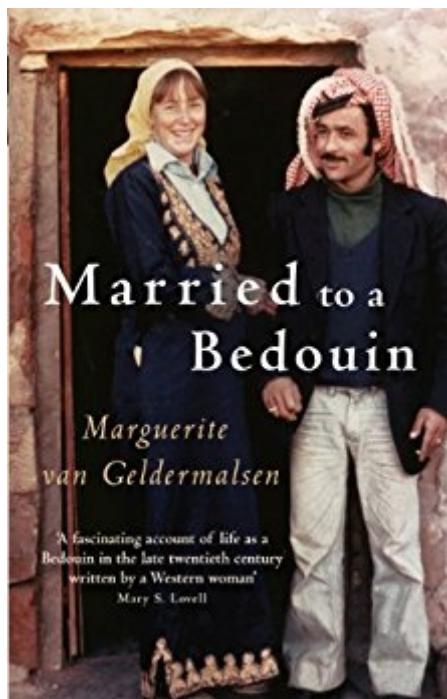


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# Married To A Bedouin



## **Synopsis**

"Where you staying?" the Bedouin asked. "Why you not stay with me tonight - in my cave?" Thus begins Marguerite van Geldermalsen's story of how a New Zealand-born nurse came to be married to Mohammad Abdallah Othman, a Bedouin souvenir-seller from the ancient city of Petra in Jordan. It was 1978 and she and a friend were travelling through the Middle East when Marguerite met the charismatic Mohammad who convinced her that he was the man for her. A life with Mohammad meant moving into his ancient cave and learning to love the regular tasks of baking shrak bread on an open fire and collecting water from the spring. And as Marguerite feels herself becoming part of the Bedouin community, she is thankful for the twist in fate that has led her to this contented life. Marguerite's light-hearted and guileless observations of the people she comes to love are as heart-warming as they are valuable, charting Bedouin traditions now lost to the modern world.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

This New Zealand-born woman with her Dutch ancestry talks about how she wasn't brave or didn't do anything extraordinary: she merely fell in love with a wonderful, decent, funny, charming and intelligent guy -- who happened to be Bedouin and live in a cave in Petra. I met them in the teahouse across from the amphitheater in the spring of 1989 when Salwa was a little girl and the

boys were toddlers. Marg and Mo became our lifeline there and secured one of the new government houses in Umm Sehun for us to rent -- with a hot shower and all. We returned in the fall for three more months, learning so much from Marguerite: how to weave a tent from goat hair, to make margluba in one pot and attend a wedding. Each year for the next 10 years (until 2000), we remet and rekindled our friendship, having incredible fun with my own bint (daughter). Now, reading her book, I cherish each page, understanding even more about their special lives and what it means to be part of a Bedouin family. It is a book that is so pertinent today in understanding another culture and how our American government is clueless about that part of the world and the vastly different outlook, superstitions, meanings, approach to everyday living that the local people have. Bravo Marguerite.

I am an American who has been living in Petra about 15 years now, and I found so many new and interesting things to enjoy from reading this book. Marguerite's story is a very personal and completely fascinating saga of falling in love and making a highly unusual life in one of the caves of Petra. She became totally immersed in the life of the Bedouin tribe which once inhabited the caves in amongst all the marvelous antiquities of the site. Her stories of learning to bake the paper-thing Bedouin shiraq bread, doing laundry and grabbing the chance to have a swim in the spring of Wadi Siyyagh, racing around the country trying to deal with all the bureaucracy to get her marriage license.....what an adventure! I only met Marguerite and Mohammed after they had moved from their cave to a house in the government-built Bedouin village outside the ruins. Reading this book about the years they spent in the cave in Petra gave me a new appreciation for her ability to meld a modern woman's sense of independence with a Bedouin tribal existence. This would be quite a feat for anyone, but her book shows that lots of love and a good sense of humor can overcome the most remarkable challenges. This is a GREAT story. Each of us has to cope with life as it happens, and it's usually not exactly what we had planned. Marguerite tells us how she handled both the large and the small challenges of a life as far from imaginable as possible. It's an inspiring story, not least because she manages to make it all sound so un-remarkable.

Having been to Jordan several times and hoping to go back (I am totally in love with the country) I picked up this book at the airport for an in-flight reading. I thought it would be just another account of a western person whining about the "wrongs" of Muslim life but I was so pleasantly surprised that I couldn't put this book down. Marguerite's story is a matter of fact account and no preaching. She writes it as she experienced it and offers us facts which we can then make into whatever we want.

She offers no criticism of the lifestyle nor does she compare it to the western lifestyle as many of the similar accounts are written nowadays. She also isn't a "hippie gone native" as she says many people used to see her as.:)) She simply fell in love with a man and adapted to live her life in his culture. You will enjoy the funny details, and I especially liked her account of the trip back to New Zealand with her Bedouin Husband.I admire her story, not just for the story itself but for the way it was written.Although I have been to Petra several times, after having read this book I went again to experience it in a totally different way, not stopping to admire the ancient Nabataean city but the people who live there and around at the moment. And the experience was unforgettable. We do tend to forget observing the people when doing the "touristy" thing at the historical sites. And ashamed, I must admit that the first couple of times around I was annoyed by the "Bedouins" trying to get me to buy the "ancient" items - but this time around I had a wonderful experience enjoying their spirit.I don't want to give away too much.Read the book. You will not regret it!Hope it will get you to plan your next holiday to Jordan!

Read this book right after touring Petra. It enhanced my feelings and memories of the place immensely. Well written. It gives a very good sense of what life was like in a Petra cave and being married to a very creative Bedouin man and his very large extended clan. Recommended highly, although I'm not sure how much I would have comprehended without having been there myself.

I came across this book when I was wandering the Petra dessert and a woman approached me and offered me to share in her tale. That woman was the author of this book. This was last year, and I was so mesmerized by the idea of a western woman marrying a bedouin, I just had to dive in...I read the book perched up on a cliff, overlooking what a sign that read "the end of the world". What I found was the richest detail of bedouin life I was ever going to find, and it enriched my trip tenfold. The book doesn't have the greatest writing, or organization, and it doesn't help that there A LOT of different characters, but it was well worth the read, and well worth learning about these fascinating people.FYI, the author is still there. No longer in a cave, but she's still there, down in the valley, making a living, and still living with the bedouins.Crazy!

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