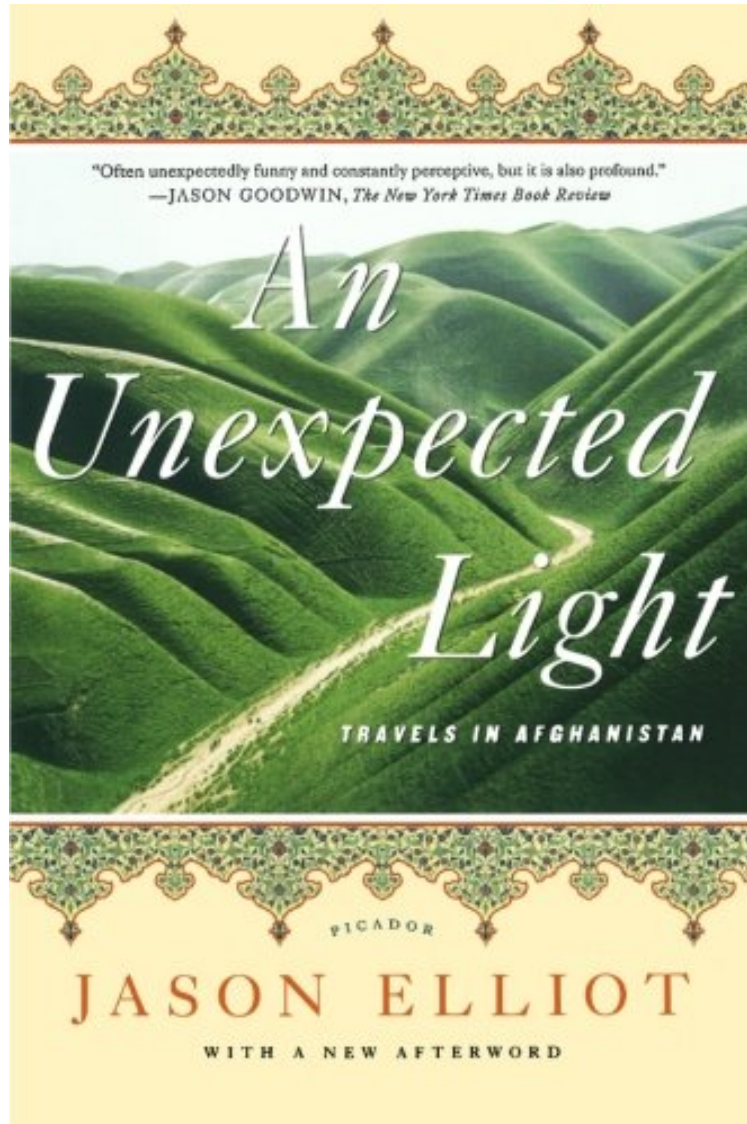


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An Unexpected Light: Travels in Afghanistan

Jason Elliot

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Jason Elliot : An Unexpected Light: Travels in Afghanistan before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised An Unexpected Light: Travels in Afghanistan:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. I highly recommend to anyone looking to learn more about the country ...By John347A thrilling tale of travel through Afghanistan with an intimate look into the culture and hospitality of the Afghan people. I highly recommend to anyone looking to learn more about the country or visit or just looking for a captivating story.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Worth a read!By Brandon Jay

Davis Though overly poetic at times, Elliot does a brilliant job bringing to light the situation in Afghanistan just prior to the Taliban occupation of Kabul. Throughout the narrative Elliot strives to uncover the answer to the question: What is left of the culture in this war ravaged land? Elliot does a great job juxtaposing his experiences in Afghanistan during the Soviet invasion, the 1992 collapse of the communist regime in Kabul, and the time he spent exploring the country in the mid-1990s. Unlike other books I have read about Afghanistan, this title focuses on the people rather than the events which influence their lives. To answer the question as to whether culture can survive in such a harsh landscape Elliot circumnavigates the country; from travelling on foot across the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, to Kabul, to Herat, to Mazar-e-Shariff, and deep into the rugged and little explored regions of the Panjshir and Nuristan. What he uncovers may surprise you... I would recommend this book to any individual who has an interest in learning about Afghanistan OUTSIDE of the events of the on-going 30 year war. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. More Than A Beautifully Written Travel Book By James Barton Phelps This book is more than a travel book. It's an opportunity for the reader to enjoy, know and appreciate the country and people of Afghanistan in the years during and just after the Soviet occupation post 1998. It's more than that too. It's a beautifully written and thoughtful book which is a stand-alone example of literature at its contemporary best. Elliott made at least two trips into Afghanistan as an independent journalist in the 1990 and in this book he chronicles the magnificence of the landscape, the quality of the Afghans, cut off and on their own and the warm and the hospitable nature of their customs. But don't cross them! It was a pleasure to read, my only caveat being that Elliott used a map with names and places which don't appear on my National Geographic Atlas (you'll want to read it with a magnifying glass and a good atlas at hand). As travel literature goes it can't be beat!

With a New Afterword by the Author Part travelogue, part historical evocation, part personal quest, and part reflection on the joys and perils of passage, this acclaimed synthesis of description and insight remains as relevant today as when it first appeared. Jason Elliot's *An Unexpected Light* is a remarkable, poignant book about Afghanistan and a heartfelt reflection on the experience of travel itself.

From Publishers Weekly An account of a trip through war-torn and poverty-stricken Afghanistan, this remarkable book could have been titled "An Unexpected Beauty." Elliot, who first traveled to the country as a 19-year-old enthusiast of the mujahedin, has no illusions about the inherent shortcomings of travel writing ("a semi-fictional collection of descriptions that affirm the prejudices of the day"). He also dismisses the journalistic method, which relies on a single bombed-out street in Kabul to monolithically represent an entire nation. So it is not without some self-deprecation that he offers his own strange and improbable adventures in the country's lawless stretches and perilous mountain passes. "I had in mind a quietly epic sort of journey," he explains. "I had given up on earlier and more ambitious schemes and was prepared to make an ally of uncertainty, with which luck so often finds a partnership." Humorous, honest and wry, a devotee of Afghanistan's culture, Elliot strives to debunk the myth of "the inscrutability of the East" and paint, in careful detail, a portrait of a deeply spiritual people. For a first-time author, his literary talents are exceptional. His sonorous prose moves forward with the purposeful grace of a river; it reads like a text unearthed from an ancient land. (Feb.) Forecast: Already lauded in England, this book announces the arrival of a major travel writer. It should capture the hearts of armchair travelers who long for the grace, wit and irreverence of an era long gone. Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal This extraordinary debut is an account of Elliot's two visits to Afghanistan. The first occurred when he joined the mujaheddin circa 1979 and was smuggled into Soviet-occupied Afghanistan; the second happened nearly ten years later, when he returned to the still war-torn land. The skirmishes that Elliot painstakingly describes here took place between the Taliban and the government of Gen. Ahmad Shah Massoud in Kabul. Today, the Taliban are in power, but Elliot's sympathies clearly lie with Massoud. Although he thought long and hard before abandoning his plan to travel to Hazara territory, where "not a chicken could cross that pass without being fired on," Elliot traveled widely in the hinterland, visiting Faizabad in the north and Herat in the west. The result is some of the finest travel writing in recent years. With its luminous descriptions of the people, the landscape (even when pockmarked by landmines), and Sufism, this book has all the hallmarks of a classic, and it puts Elliot in the same league as Robert Byron and Bruce Chatwin. Enthusiastically recommended for all travel collections. DRavi Shenoy, Naperville P.L., IL Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc. From The New Yorker As a nineteen-year-old on holiday from his native England, Elliot crossed illegally into Soviet-occupied Afghanistan and spent weeks with the mujahideen in the mountains near Kabul. Ten years later, with the Taliban gaining strength, he returned to the country as a journalist, his cowboy streak only slightly tempered by age. What saves this book from being just a swashbuckling travelogue is Elliot's far-reaching knowledge of Afghan history and his willingness to mock himself. After begging the Afghan fighters to take him on a military operation, he finds himself crouched in a cornfield and suddenly homesick: "I knew then that I lacked the qualities necessary for guerrilla warfare." Copyright 2005 The New Yorker