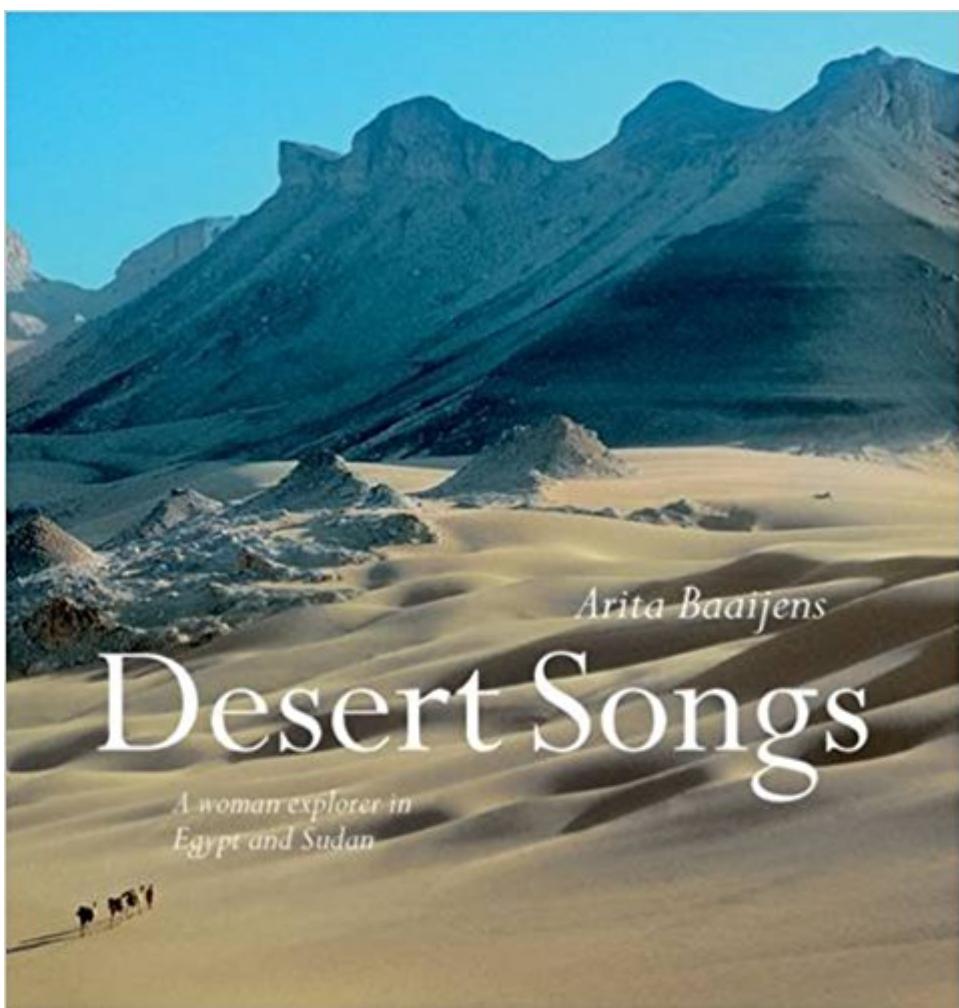


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# Desert Songs: A Woman Explorer In Egypt And Sudan



## **Synopsis**

Arita Baaijens gave up her job as an environmentalist nearly twenty years ago, and has been exploring the deserts of Egypt and Sudan with her small camel caravan ever since. In Desert Songs she recounts her passion for the desert, the place she loves and fears. On one level Desert Songs reads as an ode to camels, vistas and horizons, nomads and exploration. On another it is a story about an inward journey, a rite of passage. It is about leaving the world you know to venture into the unknown where you discover your true strength. How strong are you when there is no backup? Where do your limits lie? Baaijens sets out on a voyage of self-discovery and unrelenting physical trials to find the answers. The experience changes her forever.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Arita Baaijens is an author, a photographer, and a fellow of the Royal Geographical Society. She has published several books on her desert journeys. In between travels she lives in Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

This is a really nice book with some amazing pictures. The presentation is also brilliant. My only criticism is that I wanted more text and more of a story about the author. If it is a pure sit down and read type of book then this isn't for you. If you want to look at some amazing pictures while getting a feel for the journey then it's good.

Very few of us ever discover what our Bliss might be, let alone find the psychic energy or courage or

whatever it takes to follow a path that might lead us to it. This is particularly true for the so-called weaker sex. But in *Desert Songs*, Arita Baaijens, the intrepid Dutch photo-journalist, breaks all the rules to go on a modern day heroine's solitary inner and daunting outer journey to 'follow her bliss'. Via her vivid thoughtful narrative and spectacular photography she takes us on her extraordinary adventures in the deserts of Egypt and the Sudan. We travel with her, all the way from the first feeling of the little girl's deep sense of longing as she gazes longingly at a desert painting, to abandoning a secure home and job, and onward: to battling sandstorms while trying to subdue recalcitrant camels, desperately hunting for them when they run off, coming to love and respect them, then struggling to overcome cultural barriers with nomad guides and bodyguards in Darfur "where raids and shootings were an everyday occurrence", and succumb to the desert's majestic beauty, emptiness and silence which lays "to rest panic, fear of death, and my own madness...and surrender to what there is, the awareness that I am everything and nothing." As I read *Desert Songs*, I sensed that courage -as we understand it- is not quite the right word to describe what it took for Arita -or any other hero- go on such a journey; rather, it seems to be a deep longing for "home", a one pointed attention to seek and find the means to meld one's soul with 'the thousand and one things' that are, in fact, life itself. Ms. Baaijen's *Desert Songs* is an inspiration for all of us to seek out, find and 'follow our bliss'. Don't miss it! Can't wait for her next book.....

*Desert Songs* by Arita Baaijens is a book that captured my spirit of wanderlust and wonder! This is the descriptions of a woman explorer in the deserts of Egypt and Sudan . Arita felt the call to find her inner spirit and she left her job in Amsterdam, left everything and everyone in her life and went to the desert in search of her inner meaning. Unbelievably, she bravely set out alone with a map and camel on her first desert wandering, twenty years ago, for a three month trek, never having been in a desert environment before. The book is a mixture of travelogue and spiritual quest, with the journey far more important than the destination or scenery. She fell in love with the mystique and vast loneliness of the landscape and repeated her desert wanderings each year for twenty years, subsequently with the help of a guide, and she even joined a forty day camel drive with a caravan of over 400 animals for about 1,000 kilometres, the only woman among Arab men, but with the protection of her long-trusted guide and friend. Arita also tells much of the history of other people who have trekked the desert, because to understand the desert you must understand its history. The book has beautiful, full color photos on nearly every pair of pages. It is a most interesting read that makes the reader admire the courage and stamina of such a brave and unusual woman.

The Dutch explorer and photo-journalist, Arita Baaijens, has produced a visually stunning and moving account of her 20 years in the North African desert. *Desert Songs* captures the author's love of the desert, its stark beauty and fierce extremes, her admiration for the nomads who eke out an existence in the camel trade, and her great affection for her camels who helped and befriended her along the way. Baaijens' humanity transcends the cultural differences. She is sensitive and courageous in confronting the challenges of the 40-day desert trek and forceful and gentle in exploring a way of life that few would dare to experience first hand. Her writing brings alive an ancient way of life that is fast disappearing in this present age. The reader comes away utterly fascinated and feeling a renewed respect for and sense of the humanity that unites us all.

For those who have followed her intrepid travels through the deserts of Egypt, Libya, and Sudan, often with only her three camels for company, Arita Baaijens has become an inspiration and indeed a legend. Now she has distilled some of her marvelous experiences of travel, exploration, and adventure into her latest book. Beautifully written and profusely illustrated with her own striking images--for she is a talented photographer as well as a gifted writer--*Desert Songs* will appeal to a wide audience as it evokes the splendor, loneliness, and terror of the eastern Sahara Desert. The reader will readily understand why Arita Baaijens can be considered a worthy successor to the great Sir Wilfred Thesiger.

Arita Baaijens is the real thing. Alone with just her camels she has crossed some of the most arid and inhospitable parts of the planet. She has learnt the ways of nomads and bedouins and put them into practise in her modern day adventures. She is an inspiration to all young and old travellers with her careful and fearless approach. This book is so much more than just an account of her journeys though. It contains inspiring photographs that are far from the usual cliched desert shots of dunes and sunsets. It features real knowledge of bedouin culture that can be used as a kind of sustainable philosophy of life. It speaks too of those who inspired her just as she in turn inspires us! Buy now!

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