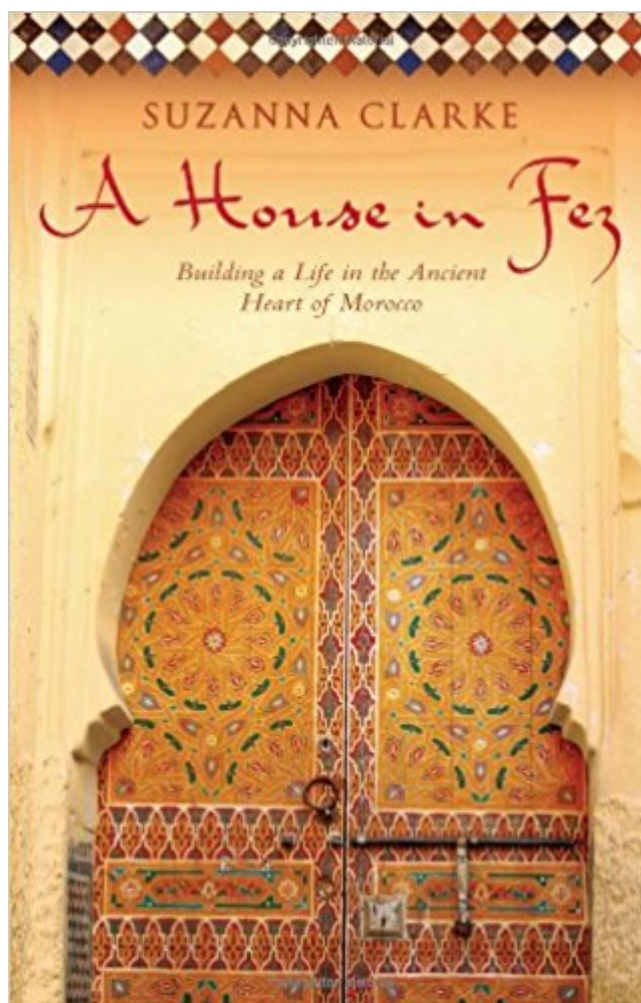


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# A House In Fez: Building A Life In The Ancient Heart Of Morocco



## Synopsis

The Medina -- the Old City -- of Fez is the best-preserved, medieval walled city in the world. Inside this vibrant Moroccan community, internet cafes and mobile phones coexist with a maze of donkey-trod alleyways, thousand-year-old sewer systems, and Arab-style houses, gorgeous with intricate, if often shabby, mosaic work. While vacationing in Morocco, Suzanna Clarke and her husband, Sandy, are inspired to buy a dilapidated, centuries-old riad in Fez with the aim of restoring it to its original splendor, using only traditional craftsmen and handmade materials. So begins a remarkable adventure that is bewildering, at times hilarious, and ultimately immensely rewarding. *A House in Fez* chronicles their meticulous restoration, but it is also a journey into Moroccan customs and lore and a window into the lives of its people as friendships blossom. When the riad is finally returned to its former glory, Suzanna finds she has not just restored an old house, but also her soul.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Beware of falling in love while on vacation. You might end up buying a riad. Less of a tourist center than Marrakesh or Tangier, Fez is the largest car-free urban area and the best-preserved medieval walled city in the world. While on vacation, Australian photojournalist Clarke and her husband were bewitched by the exotic city, deciding to return and begin a search for a riad (a large home with an inner courtyard) to renovate. This enjoyable narrative chronicles the couple's navigation through a puzzling new world. Readers get to tag along while Clarke deals with Kafkaesque bureaucracy, maneuvers delicately through relationships with neighbors, contractors and construction workers, and goes back to school to improve her French. She weaves this personal narrative together with

snippets of the fascinating history and culture of her adopted country. This is an all too brief but enjoyable excursion into one woman's experience with a place she clearly loves. Readers will surely fall under its spell as well. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Born in New Zealand, Suzanna Clarke grew up in several parts of Australia. In her twenties she lived in a Welsh commune, an Amsterdam squat and a Buddhist monastery in Nepal. She has worked as a photojournalist for more than two decades and is the arts director of The Daily Mail in Brisbane. Her husband, Sandy, is a radio broadcaster who now spends most of his time in Fez. Their blog is [riadzany.blogspot.com](http://riadzany.blogspot.com).

I truly enjoyed this book, and the people in it were interesting and likable. I like Suzanna's writing style, and enjoyed the cultural information that is included throughout the book. I also very much enjoyed the descriptions of the riad and the renovations. I was disappointed that the blog mentioned in the book appears to have been reincarnated as more a commercial venture than the personal blog that I imagine it was while the book was being written. I visited, hoping to see photos of the riad and the renovations, etc., but was unable to find anything like that buried in the newish blog. As someone else mentioned, the Kindle version of this book is an absolute mess. It badly needs to be edited. Randomly interspersed throughout sentences are fragments that include the book title and page numbers. If this had happened once or twice it could be overlooked, but there are many instances where a sentence is interrupted by the title and page number. There are many missing words, and other typographical and editorial errors, as well.

My husband and I love to travel internationally, and have traveled on our own to some pretty exotic places. We have toyed with the idea of buying a house somewhere outside the United States. This book presents pros and cons for doing so, regardless of where one is thinking of having a home abroad. I appreciate the way Suzanna Clarke describes her experiences without becoming overly self-absorbed. Au contraire, her self-deprecation is quite endearing and amusing. I particularly liked reading about the relationships she formed with all kinds of people; from expats, to her neighbors, bureaucrats and workers. She certainly got it right from the beginning: you can't buy and restore a home in a place like Fez without an inshallah attitude, which she and her husband seemed to completely embrace. Our next trip is to Morocco, and I'm very glad I read this book. It is well written and fast paced. The enjoyment of the reading experience is enhanced by the

rich and interesting context one receives into Fez and Morocco through her commentary about culture, architecture, history, and religion. And I enjoyed following up reading the book with the visuals on Suzanna's blog. Although I loved reading about Suzanna's experience, I could not in my wildest dreams ever imagine buying a house in Fez and living the drama she described. But kudos to her and her husband for their perseverance. I hope that their cultural immersion continues to be the amazingly rich and zany life experience they had hoped for, and then some!

Great book but Kindle version should be checked for typos. For an older book price should be lower and needs proofreading.

Getting ready for a trip to Morocco and this gives good descriptions about buildings and people - a lot of information it will be handy to know that would be boring reading about without the "foreigner buys and renovates house" story line. The part about "we go away for months and come back to find work not done as we expected" is a little tedious and naive, but the book gives nice insight into Morocco. Of course, I have no basis for judging accuracy.

An Australian couple visit Fez, Morocco, fall in love with the city, culture, history and architecture and decide to buy a restore an old Riad in the heart of the ancient Medina of Fez. That's where this account of a clash of cultures begins. Fez Morocco is not only geographically foreign, it is of another past time. The very essence of life is at least from the 19th century, if not earlier. Materials and skilled workers are in short supply. Bureaucracy is stifling. Graft and bribery rampant. And the prevailing attitude of workers, officials, and residents of this ancient city is best summed up by the ubiquitous phrase - "Insha'Allah", "God willing". Clarke is a good writer but she starts to repeat experiences and results again and again towards the end of her saga. I started this non-fiction story before visiting Fez, then picked it up and finished it after my visit. It was like a return visit a second time, which was enjoyable.

A very enjoyable book on the practicalities of buying and restoring a riad. The tone was light and easy, and the book a fun peek at what seemed like a frustrating, albeit rewarding, process. If you're interested in Morocco, or daydreaming about moving there, I would recommend this book.

A charming and easy to read book that captures well the spirit of Morocco. For extra fun, search for pictures of their house, some of the Moroccan words/places from the book, and riads and dars in

general. It's a nice visual add on to the beauty that the book describes.

I thoroughly enjoyed this book and felt a vicarious bond to Fez. And then when I visited Fez, the details, sensibility for the culture, the daily occurrence, the sights, people, all come together to help you fall in love with Fez. I would love to meet the author in a future trip to Fez, in this Riyadh!

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