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Christine Hogan. *The Veiled Lands: A Woman's Journey into the Heart of the Islamic World*. Pan Macmillan, 2006.

Review by Gillian Dooley in *The Adelaide Review* 28 July 2006.

Sydney journalist Christine Hogan would have us believe she has ventured intrepidly to the 'heart of the Islamic world' and returned to tell the tale against mighty odds – on her first trip she says she couldn't tell her family where she was going in case they regarded her as certifiably insane. So that would be Baghdad, perhaps, or the West Bank? Or perhaps a secret mission to Mecca, surely by most definitions the 'heart' of Islam?

Not at all. Christine has a healthy respect for her safety and comfort and her itinerary included Turkey, Jordan, the North African countries and a few days in luxurious Dubai. Ostensibly bent on researching women in Islam, she would ask questions if she happened to run across a female, but usually this flirtatious woman of a certain age was quite happy being squired by the handsome male companions who she lined up to escort her.

Every so often we are treated to a dutiful history lesson about the great gals of the middle eastern world, but Hogan's pilgrimage to the most visited tourist sites south and east of the Mediterranean is superficial and has little new to say.