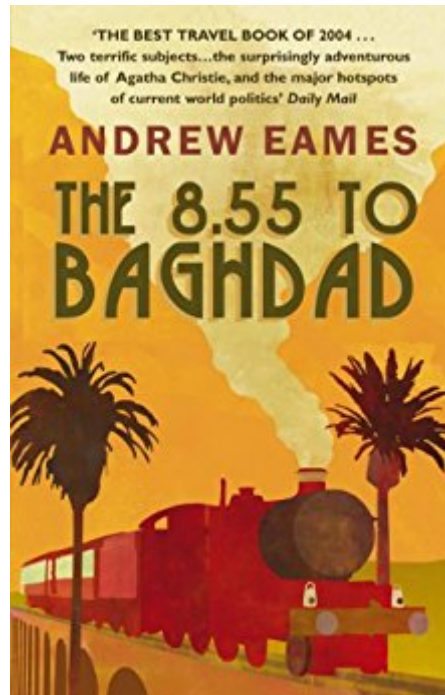




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# The 8.55 To Baghdad



## Synopsis

Travel journalist Andrew Eames was in the ancient Syrian city of Aleppo when he met an elderly lady who had known Agatha Christie. Fascinated by the exotic history of this quintessentially English crime writer, he decided to retrace the trip from London to Baghdad which she made in 1928 - a journey which was to change Agatha Christie completely and led to her other life as the wife of an archaeologist in the deserts of Syria and Iraq. Travelling from London to Baghdad by train on the eve of the Iraq war, through the troubled areas of the Balkans and the Middle East, Eames found stark contrasts to the old Orient Express route as well as some unexpected connections with the past.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

To quote from GEOGRAPHICAL MAGAZINE, "Eames laces the book with Christie trivia and a certain sly wit. His descriptions of the people he meets and the places he visited are both vivid and perceptive... THE 8:55 TO BAGHDAD is a thoroughly enjoyable read that combines an Agatha-centric travelogue with a thought-provoking journey through a benighted land."Treading

lightly throughout this work is Eames' own spiritual quest. Some have noted the book's weak ending and it is rather like the last gasp of an arriving steam locomotive. Since the inspiration for the book occurred during an earlier trip that included Aleppo, perhaps Eames, an atheist, could have ended the book with the advice--really a parting blessing--that he received in Konya from Alp Aslan, a Muslim. "Go," he said, "write a travel book in search of the miracle of creation. Go looking for God." (P. 211) However, such an ending would have required that Eames double-back at the conclusion of his present journey--an arduous and awkward maneuver he was not prepared to make at present--either in writing or in life.

For all lovers of train travel in the grand style and admirers of Agatha Christie. A most satisfying journey.

I bought this book for my Mum because she loves Christie and ended up reading it myself. I was especially taken by the sections in Eastern Europe and Iraq. This book introduced me to places in geography and history that I had not been to before and was a pleasant and thought-provoking read.

A wonderful book and it arrived on time and very well packed. I would highly recommend the book as it was recommended to me! Thank you also for the excellent service!

Could not get into this story...boring

The cover says it is about 'on the trail of Agatha Christie' and I found it had very little that one doesn't already know from her own autobiography. Few and far accounts on Agatha - it took pages and pages before it said anything about her. It is mostly a political and personal historical views on Iraq, Turkey and their towns. It is all over the place w/archaeological tidbits, political and cultural views, personal anecdotes, etc - anything but Agatha facts and stories. It took me forever to read this and even purchased it in Kindle form so I could do searches for the word "Agatha". Don't bother w/this one - as you can get more information from her own books. I don't feel I wasted my money but it did waste my time.

Love travel books that include history and literature, and this book has it in spades. And therein lies the problem/ Its title says 'following Agatha Christie'. I'm not a huge fan of mysteries but I did love

her memoir *Come Tell Me How You Live*, but assumed I'd find a lot of her in the book. Well, if you are too, you'll be disappointed I think. Oh there is some and it's all very interesting (and has actually led to me wanting to read *Murder on the Orient Express*), but there is also the history of the OE, description of the coaches, history of the Balkan conflict, ancient history in the middle east, archaeology and who has ownership of artifacts, as well as too many descriptions of his bus travel from Damascus to Baghdad. This last frustrated me - I so didn't care about these companions of his, his descriptions of their petty spats, his eye rolls. He could have taken them out and added more about Christie (like did she ever meet up with Gertrude Bell, the woman who worked closely with Lawrence of Arabia?) This is why I'm giving this well written book only four stars. But if you are like me, and know how to scroll past the fluff, you are in for a treat.

Up front and immediately - this is a great find! From the enticing title (although I have never read her popular novels) to the book jacket blurb that the author evidences a "sly wit" in his account of a journey through tense times, to a targeted Iraq, straight into a quote: If you cannot find Osama, Bomb Iraq If the markets are a drama, Bomb Iraq If the terrorists are frisky Pakistan is looking shifty North Korea is too risky, Bomb Iraq. Or from a fellow train traveler in rural Turkey about President Bush: "You have traveled. I have traveled. We understand each other. But President Bush? Has he traveled? What is that expression--travel broadens the mind?" Eames' humour and the selections he chooses to write of, are far from sly! Eames a British journalist recounts his travels by train, ferry and bus from London to Baghdad and onto Ur as replicates the journey that Agatha Christie took back in 1928, but with far more difficulty as this is in the age of Desert Storm and the Axis of Evil. Never mind, he only gets bombed once, and that by his "own side", at the conclusion of his quest in the area of the (claimed) original site of the "Garden of Eden". He travels partly on the famed Orient Express with a cast of characters he suspects of being invented for his book's purpose by Agatha Christie herself. He notes that the "Swiss train track-men who walk the length of the `consist', tapping wheels, keep their eyes firmly on their task. To raise the gaze to window level," he says, "would have risked invading the privacy of a camp hairdresser touching up his highlights or a bouffant old goat touching up his African princess." He becomes far more serious about the openness and genuine hospitality of the Iraq people at the conclusion of his adventure, noting the warmth and friendliness, mixed with caution and fear of Saddam's constant presence. This however is no "soft adventure" as the author calls those travel narratives of crossing the Atlantic in a barrel or seeking a punch-up in a bar, it contains some hard-core history, acute observations of people and politics and is a great - too rapidly finished- read. The author hopes, as do many of the peoples of

biblical Babylon he meets that the seemingly, now unstoppable war will cleanse away the isolation and mistrust of the region, the original "cradle of civilization" as the floods of the rainy season in Mesopotamia "purge the streets of the accumulated rubbish in a free-flowing enema."

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