



# The Road from Damascus: A Journey Through Syria (Bridge Between the Cultures Series)

*Scott C Davis*

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In February 2001 Scott C. Davis flew to Damascus, attended raucous political salons, talked all night, and sat in local cafes debating the nature of the evolving Syrian nation. Such openness was new in Syria. Was it a sign of things to come? Would the Damascene Curtain fall as heavily and permanently as did the Berlin Wall? Would Damascus become another tourist trap bursting with American franchise restaurants, another Amman? To answer these questions, and to give a feel for the real country beneath the rapidly changing surfaces, Davis tells a story of an earlier time when Syrians did not discuss politics for fear of the 'mukhabarat' and when some hesitated, in their own homes, even to mention the name of the Syrian president. Fourteen years earlier, in October 1987, Davis had come to Damascus and begun a slow, difficult journey through Syrian society. He met artists and intellectuals, wealthy landowners, retired mystics, and also slept on the floor beside humble peasants and working folk. The times were quiet, jobs scarce, and ordinary folk could take a few moments for tea with a guest. Many of those Davis met took pride in their own simplicity. Denied political power and wealth, they aspired instead to wisdom - or at least to perfecting a sardonic wit. This tale of grace, humour, and humanity turns on the author's search for truth and, also, for a few good quotes for his book - a search that took him across Syria in the footsteps of Alexander to the ancient Roman Bridge over the Tigris River in the far eastern tip of the country - and then brought him racing back to Damascus to find the Patriarch of Antioch.

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