

# Laura of Arabia

*A Guide to living in and understanding the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.*

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## ➤ Why Didn't They Tell Me? - 1000 years of Muslim History

Educators often refer to the Middle Ages, a time period from the sixth century to the sixteenth century, as the Dark Ages. It is spoken of as a time of backwardness and cultural decline. History books fail to mention the wondrous achievements of the Arab-Islamic Empire. Following the death of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), the Islamic Empire grew and expanded eastward to China and westward to Spain. From the 7th century onwards, Islamic scholars built on the ancient knowledge of the Greeks, Romans and Persians; making breakthroughs that paved the way for the European Renaissance. They even developed the "Scientific Method". The modern world owes much of its progress in all fields of human intellectual activity, including medicine, engineering, mathematics, astronomy, physics, and chemistry to the "Golden Age" of the Arab/Islamic Empire - but all of this was never discussed in school. A new exhibit which opened in January, 2010 at the London Science Museum is aimed at correcting this glaring oversight. The exhibit is entitled, "1001 Inventions: Discover the Muslim Heritage in our World". The ongoing exhibit offers visitors a chance to explore inventions and discoveries made by scholars, engineers and scientists living in Muslim civilizations during the "Golden Age of Islam". It contains a diverse range of exhibits and interactive displays and begins with a short film, "Library of Secrets" in which award-winning actor Ben Kingsley plays the 12th century engineer Al-Jazari. The displays are divided into seven zones: homes, market, school, hospital, town, world and universe. Exhibits include a six metre high replica of the "Elephant Clock", a 13th century water clock: in addition to a model of a Baghdad Courtyard house, medical instruments from a thousand years ago (many of which are still used today), and a model of a 9th century dark room later called "camera obscura". The exhibition is sponsored by the Abdullatif Jameel Foundation. Through the relationship with the 1001 Inventions Organization, the foundation aims to improve mainstream understanding of the Muslim contributions to the arts, to science and to the development of modern civilization. This exhibition marks the beginning of a five year world tour, partnering with the worlds' best science and educational institutions. Watch for it in your city!