

Along the new Neolithic Heritage Trail south of Wadi Faynan, Jordan, hikers and drivers can connect four top archeological sites and Petra. Along the way, the wind-sculpted narrows called Siq' al-Ba'ja is a highlight. Photo by George Azar.

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9009 West Loop South
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USA

President

Nabeel M. Amudi

Director

Public Affairs

Alma Kombargi

Editor

Richard Doughty

Assistant Editors

Arthur P. Clark
Alva Robinson

Circulation

Edna Catchings

Administration

Sarah Miller

Print Design

and Production

Graphic Engine Design

Printed in the USA

RR Donnelley/Wetmore

Digital Design

and Production

eSiteful Corporation

Online Translations

Transperfect

Contacts

Subscriptions:
saworld@aramcoservices.com

Editorial:
editor@aramcoservices.com

Mail:

Saudi Aramco World
Post Office Box 2106
Houston, Texas
77252-2106 USA

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Back Cover



The "moon-watching tower" of a wooden mosque in Xunhau, China, rises between the town and the mountains. Though not built as a minaret for calling prayers, this pagoda-like tower is, today, outfitted with loudspeakers. Photo by Jonathan Bloom.

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Saudi Aramco, the energy company born as an international enterprise more than 80 years ago, distributes *Saudi Aramco World* to increase cross-cultural understanding. The magazine's goal is to broaden knowledge of the cultures, history and geography of the Arab and Muslim worlds and their connections with the West. *Saudi Aramco World* is distributed without charge, upon request, to a limited number of interested readers.



2 Jordan, Long Before Petra

Written by Gail Simmons

Photography by George Azar

In a part of Jordan long defined by 2400-year-old Petra, archeology at 12,000-year-old Wadi Faynan is turning up new evidence of the region's pivotal role in the agricultural revolution.



10 Record-breaking Record-breaking

Written by Gerald Zarr



From this Largest Carpet of Flowers, laid out in Jiddah, Saudi Arabia, to 254,537 national-anthem singers in Dhaka, Bangladesh, more world records than ever are being set from the Arabian Peninsula to South Asia.

14

The Back-road Historic Mosques of China

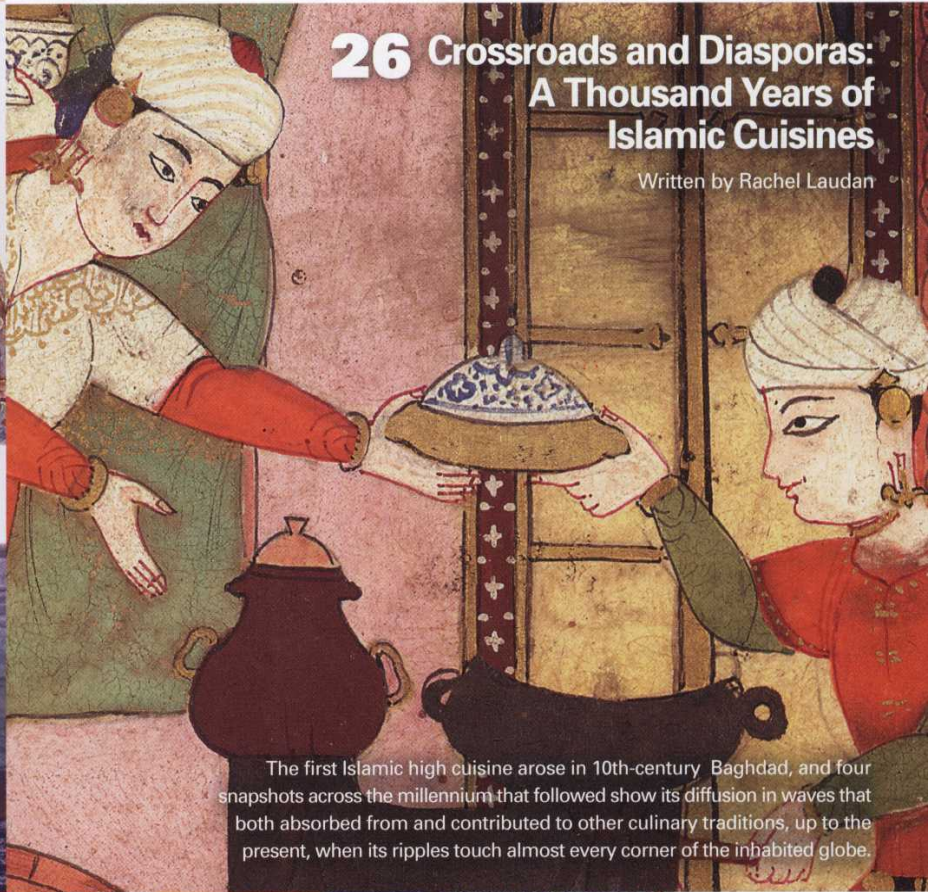
Written by Sheila Blair, Jonathan Bloom and Nancy Steinhardt
Photography by Jonathan Bloom



Dozens of increasingly scarce, wood-built mosques, visited over a 2500-kilometer itinerary, show deep roots in traditional Chinese architecture, decorative principles and craftsmanship, in addition to uniquely Islamic adaptations.

26 Crossroads and Diasporas: A Thousand Years of Islamic Cuisines

Written by Rachel Laudan



The first Islamic high cuisine arose in 10th-century Baghdad, and four snapshots across the millennium that followed show its diffusion in waves that both absorbed from and contributed to other culinary traditions, up to the present, when its ripples touch almost every corner of the inhabited globe.

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SWEETS

2015 GREGORIAN AND
1436 - 1437 HIJRI CALENDARS

2015 Calendar: Sweets

Introductions by Rachel Laudan and Paul Lunde

The art of sugar refining inspired delicious innovations that today remain touchstones of culture.

36 Classroom Guide
Written by Julie Weiss

38 Events & Exhibitions

SPECIAL INSERT