

Iran Travel Guide



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About Iran

Iran ought to be one of the world's most treasured travel destinations, blessed as it is with extraordinary historical sites, exquisite landscapes and a fascinating culture. Rich Persian heritage dating back 3,000 years is evident throughout the country. Historical sights like the ancient ruins of Persepolis and the still-glorious former capital of Isfahan are abundant. Iran has a distinct cultural identity too, with its predominately Shia-Muslim population, which sets it apart from most nations in the Islamic world.

Ancient Persia has the potential to attract millions of tourists per year, but it's the modern reforming Iran that could be of as much interest. It would be also well worth seeing for its diversity of landscapes, monuments, customs and lifestyles that make Iran attractive in any season. About one million historical sites exist in Iran. It is obvious that even the most interesting of these can be visited only by making trips to the country. These trips are all the more pleasant because visitors to Iran never leave it without memories of its wonderfully hospitable people. Visit Iran, to get a first-hand experience of this fascinating, welcoming country.



Iran History, Language and Culture



History of Iran

In the 6th century BC, the first Persian Empire was founded by Cyrus the Great, which was overthrown by Alexander the Great some 200 years later, after which came a long chain of invasions from Arabs, Turks and Mongols, among others. Islam arrived in the 7th century.

It wasn't until the heights of the Safavid dynasty in the late 1500s that the Persian Empire could really be said to have regained greatness. The period was marked by lengthy wars with the Ottomans and opulent

buildings, many of them religious, as the Shia form of Islam was cemented in the country. By the 19th century, European influence was beginning to be felt strongly, exacerbated after the discovery of oil in the early 1900s. In the 1970s, the economic mismanagement and secular lifestyle of the ruling Shah was a catalyst for the 1979 popular revolution, spearheaded by Ayatollah Khomeini, and Iran became an Islamic Republic. Now, nearly four decades since the revolution, the Islamic Republic of Iran has remained a powerful force in the region.

Iranian Culture



Religion

Of the 98% Muslim population, 98% are Shi'a and 9% are Sunni. The remaining 2% consists of Christian, Jewish, Zoroastrian and Baha'i faiths.

Social Conventions

Visitors should avoid contentious political subjects in conversation. Handshaking is customary, but not with of the opposite sex. Iranians are incredibly hospitable and like to entertain. It is customary to be offered tea, and guests are expected to accept hospitality.

Dress

Men: There are few restrictions about men's dress.

Women: All females over the age of nine must wear a hijab, the islamic dress. There is no uniformity, however, regarding its type and the amount of coverage it provides. The most common wear is the manto, a full-length, long sleeved overcoat, an overwhelming array of which is readily available in the shops. If you do not want to buy any, bring a knee-length, loose tunic that can be worn with a long skirt or trousers (jeans are acceptable). Hair and neck should be covered with a scarf. The colors of the clothes do not really matter. If you travel in summer, light fabrics are strongly recommended.

Language in Iran

Persian (Farsi) is the most widely spoken language, used by %58 of the population. Arabic is spoken by %1 in Khuzestan in the southwest, and Turkish in the northwest around Tabriz. English, French and (to a lesser extent) German are spoken by many businesspeople and officials.

Iran's Weather

Best time to visit

The size of Iran means that can temperatures can vary hugely, depending on which corner of the country you find yourself in. Days can be incredibly hot between May and October, particularly in the desert regions and along the Gulf Coast, while the mountain ranges of the

north become freezing over winter.

Nights can be especially cold. In general terms, major cities like Tehran, Esfahan and Tabriz have seasons broadly equivalent to those in Mediterranean Europe. Those travelers hoping to ski will find most action between November and March.

In Tehran, lightweight clothing is worn from April to October while medium weights are advised from November to March. Be reminded, however, that dress should always err on the side of conservatism, particularly for women – the wearing of head scarves is obligatory in public.



Geography of Iran



Iran is located in the Middle East, bordered to the north by Turkmenistan and the Caspian Sea, the east by Afghanistan and Pakistan, the south by the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman, and the west by Iraq and Turkey. The

centre and east of the country are largely barren undulating desert, but there are mountainous regions in the west along the Turkish and Iraqi borders and in the north where the Elburz Mountains rise steeply from a fertile belt around the Caspian Sea.

Health

In general, Iran is a healthy country to travel in, and you are unlikely to catch any exotic diseases here. It is not necessary to bring medicine. You can refer in health centers even in villages and small towns. The quality of medical care is reasonably high by international standards.

Safety and Security

Iran is one of the safest territories in the world and the stability of security is carried out by the ministry of interior and law enforces (police) is the executive arm of this ministry. The roads security and supervision on the practice of driving codes and laws in all over the country is carried out by police.

Keeping in Touch in Iran

Mobile phone:

Roaming agreements exist with some international mobile phone operators but visitors are advised to check with their service provider before travelling. Coverage is limited to urban areas.

Internet:

There are Internet cafés in Tehran and all other major cities. Free Wi-Fi access is also available in hotels and airports.

Press:

- The main English-language papers are Iran News, Iran Daily and Tehran Times.

Television:

- Press TV is IRIB's English-language satellite channel.

Power Plugs and Sockets:

In Iran, the power sockets are of type C and F. The standard voltage is 220 V and the standard frequency is 50 Hz.

In Iran, the power sockets used are of type C and F. Check out the following pictures.

Your need for a power plug adapter depends on the power plugs used in your own country.

Voltage and frequency: You can use your electronic appliances in Iran, if the standard voltage in your country is in between 240 - 220 V (as is in the UK, Europe, Australia and most of Asia and Africa).

If the frequency in Iran (50 Hz) differs from the one in your country, it is not advised to use your appliances. But if there is no voltage difference, you could (at your own risk) try to use the appliance for a short time. Be especially careful with moving, rotating and time related appliances like clocks, shavers and electric fan heaters.

To be sure, check the label on the appliance. Some appliances never need a converter. If the label states *INPUT: 240-100V, 60/50 Hz* the appliance can be used in all countries in the world. This is common for chargers of tablets/laptops, photo cameras, cell phones, toothbrushes, etc.



Type C: This socket also works with plug E and F



Type F: This socket also works with plug C and E

Iranian Food and Drink

Rice is the staple food and the Iranians cook it in style, eating it with wheat bread, yoghurt, lamb and aubergines. Typical Persian flavors are subtle, with cinnamon, cloves, turmeric, cardamom and saffron all delicately blended.

Garlic and lime also feature heavily. Many Iranians make their own yoghurt, which can be used as an ingredient in many dishes or as a cool and refreshing drink. Kebabs, served either in oven-fresh bread or with rice, tend to dominate menus, but there is plenty more besides. Vegetarianism is uncommon, but visitors will often find meat-free options.

Specialties:

Chelokhoresh: Rice topped with vegetables and meat in a nut sauce.

Sabzi Polo: Pilau rice cooked with fresh herbs.

Shirin Polo: Sweet-sour saffron-colored rice with raisins, almonds and orange.

Adas polo: Rice, lentils and meat.

Polo Morgh: Chicken and pilau rice.

Chelokababs: Rice with skewered meats cooked over charcoal.

Kofte: Minced meat formed into meatballs.

Kofteghusht: Meatloaf.

Abgusht: Mutton and chickpea stew.

Fesenjan: Pomegranate walnut stew.

Bademjan: Aubergine and tomato stew.

Doogh: A cold drink made from yoghurt and mineral water.

Faloodeh: A cold dessert consisting of thin vermicelli noodles made from corn starch mixed in semi-frozen syrup made from sugar and rose water

Tipping: In large hotels, a %10 to %15 service charge is added to the bill. In restaurants, it is usual to leave small change.



• Money & Duty free for Iran

Currency & Money:

The Iranian rial (IRR; symbol Rs) is the currency of Iran. Although the «Toman» is no longer an official unit of Iranian currency, Iranians commonly express amounts of money and prices of goods in «tomans». For this purpose, one «Toman» equals 10 rials. Iranian Rial Notes are in denominations of Rs 5,000 ,10,000 ,20,000 ,50,000 ,100,000 200 ,500 ,1,000 ,2,000 and 100. Coins are in denominations of Rs,1,000 ,2,000 ,5,000 100 ,250 and 50.

Credit cards:

MasterCard is not accepted in Iran, and credit cards should emphatically not be relied on as the sole means of payment. Be aware too that if the card was issued in the USA, it may not be usable due to the US trade embargo.

ATM:

ATMs can be used only by holders of local bank accounts.

Travelers cheques:

It is not possible to exchange travelers' cheques.

Banking hours:

Sat-Wed 07:30-13:30, Thurs 07:30-12:30.

Currency restriction:

The import of foreign currencies up to USD 10,000.- or equivalent. Amounts exceeding USD 10,000.- must be declared on arrival. The export of foreign currency is limited to the amount declared on arrival.

Currency exchange:

It is advisable to bring hard currency for exchange purposes.



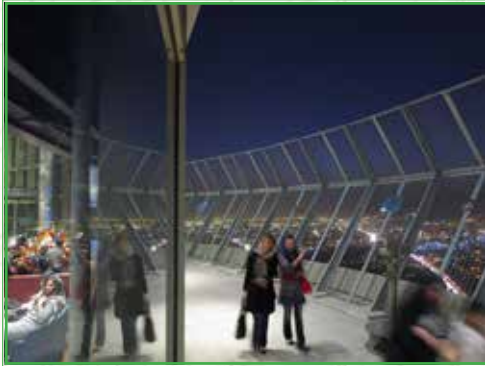
Shopping in Iran



While the shops offer a wide selection of quality goods, local items can be bought in the many bazaars. Purchases include hand-carved, inlaid woodwork, carpets, rugs, silks, leather goods, mats, tablecloths, gold, silver, glass and ceramics. Bargaining is customary. There are restrictions on which items may be taken out of the country. It is notable that, most shops will not provide you with change and small notes are therefore the most useful.

Shopping hours: Generally 09:00-13:00 and 15:00-20:00.

→ Travel to Tehran



Tehran is the capital of Iran and Tehran Province. With a population of around 9 million in the city and 16 million in the wider metropolitan area, Tehran is the largest city and urban area of Iran, the 2nd-largest city in Western Asia, and the 3rd-largest in the Middle East. It is ranked 29th in the world by the population of its metropolitan area.

The most famous landmarks of the city include the Azadi Tower, a memorial built during the Pahlavi period, and the Milad Tower, the world's 17th tallest freestanding structure, which was built in 2007. Tabiat Bridge, which was completed in 2014, is considered the third contemporary symbol of the city.

Tehran features a semi-arid climate with continental climate characteristics and a Mediterranean climate precipitation pattern.

Imam Khomeini International Airport

Airport guides

Location: Tehran Imam Khomeini International Airport is located 30km (19 miles) southwest of the city center.

Transportation:

You will be met in the arrival areas by a representative of Iran Hepatitis Network in order to pick you up from the airport on time.

Money:

Banks are available both airside and landside. There is also a bureau de change. Credit cards are not widely accepted in Iran.

Communication:

Free Wi-Fi access is available in parts of the terminal building, including the departure lounge. It is also available in hotels and conference halls.

Food:

There is a restaurant offering traditional Persian dishes, plus coffee/snack bars.

Shopping:

Duty-free shopping is available (no alcohol), along with outlets selling specialty Iranian foods, giftware and spices.



Tehran Tour by Metro

Nowadays, Tehran owns one of the most advanced metro networks of the world. It is the least expensive one too. The longest possible way you ride will not cost more than half a dollar!



1. Tajrish Bazaar

Let us start from Tajrish, the hustle bustle district in northern Tehran. A strange combination of large and tranquil gardens and villas erected on rocks and hills just few hundred meters from Tajrish Bazaar (everyday visiting period 8AM - 8PM) as a major attraction. A labyrinth of old traditional bazaar and modern shopping malls. You may find all kinds of fresh and dried vegetable and fruits, rural dairy and a large variety of wild plums and other edibles, Jewellery, sport wear and street snacks, and many more, and just on the edge of a main bus terminal. This Bazaar is a very good place to see Tehrani life style and daily activities.

When finished in Tajrish, you will go down again and ride Metro southbound.

2. Fire and Water Park + Bridge of Nature+ Museum of War Martyrs

Tajrish/Gheytariyeh/Shahid Sadr/Gholhak/Doctor Shariati/Mirdamad and then you should get off at Haghani station to arrive in a vast modern park and enjoy one of the most beautiful views of Tehran from the top of hills in Haghani Park and Fire and Water Park, connected

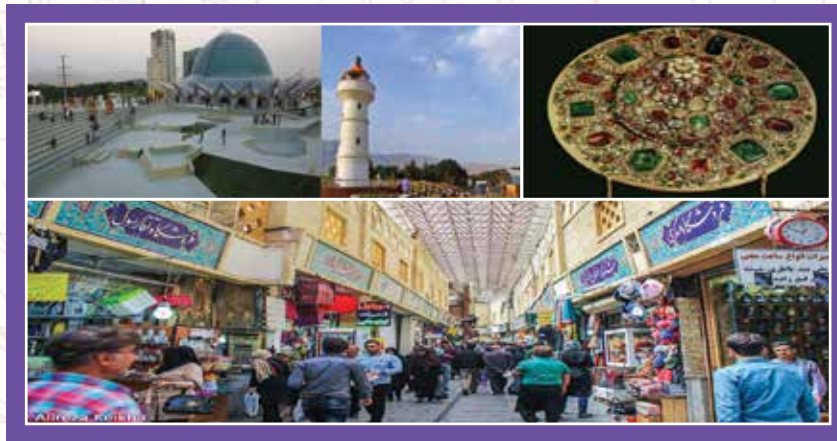
together through Bridge of Nature.

Martyrs Museum is located just nearby, in a vast and fresh location. Then you may spend an hour with locals and enjoy a snack or local dishes in different restaurants over there and then walk back to Metro station.

3. Royal Jewelry Treasury

Haghani/ Hemmat/ Mosalla/ Beheshti/ Mofatteh/ Haft-e-Tir/ Taaleghani (Taleqani)/Darvazeh Dowlat/ Saadi. Disembark here and walk to the Treasury of National Jewels (Saturday to Tuesday 14:00-16:30).

After 7 minutes walking you will be in front of this priceless treasury hidden in the basement of the old building of the Central Bank, just opposite the Turkish and German embassies. Berlin Alley is neighboring southern walls of the German embassy and houses another old local market of clothes and accessories. Enjoy visiting the treasury peacefully although other attractions are very close to you and there is no need to rush!



4. Downtown Museums

When your treasury visit is finished, walk for a few minutes to reach your next stop which is Imam Khomeini square, the next stop after Saadi station and there is no need to take metro again. Just on the right hand side of the Square, there is a vast compound entirely stone paved and closed to traffic, a tranquil and silent place and home to all buildings of Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and a few museums:

National Museum of Iran (everyday 09:30-17:30)

Malek Museum (Sat-Thu 09:00-16:30)

Iran Post Museum (Sat-Wed 08:00-16:00, Thu 08:00-13:00)

Sardar-e Bagh-e Melli (Old Gate of Tehran) (Sat-Thu 08:00-17:00)

All surrounded by century old tall trees , most of the MFA buildings are built by German architects of the time of Reza Shah Pahlavi which are sturdy and glorious.



5. Golestan Palace and Bazaar of Tehran

After visiting MFA compound and the museums, you have to take another short walk or wait in the queue to ride the free electric train to the next destination. The Panzdah-e Khordad station, just close to Golestan Palace Complex and the Main Bazaar of Tehran. There is again a large street, completely stone paved and closed to vehicles but open to the electric train and horse carts. The train is free but you should pay for the carriage. When you complete your tour here it is time to ride metro again at Panzdah-e Khordad square and travel northbound.



6. Azadi Square

Imam Khomeini/ Saadi/ Darvazeh Dowlat / Taleghani/ Mofatteh and then Beheshti. Disembark here and go to the other line heading to Azadegan. Get off again at Teatre Shahr crossing station and join the people who are heading to Azadi square west bound. After few stops you will be in Azadi square. Ascend to the ground level and will find yourself just at entrance of the West Bus Terminal. Few minutes later you will be in Azadi Tower and Museum just in the middle of the Square.

7. Imam Khomeini Shrine

Then if interested to pay a visit to Imam Khomeini Shrine, you should return to Azadi station and take the line which takes you back directly to Darvazeh Dowlat station. It is eight stations from Azadi Square. Then get off once more and switch on the red line (North to South) to head to Kahrizak station, the most southern point of the red line. The shrine station is one or two stops prior to Kahrizak. You may visit the shrine which is located in the corner of Tehran Public Graveyard and your tour is finished.

Please note that it could take more than 1 day to complete your Tehran tour by metro.





Birjand

Birjand is the east Iranian provincial capital of South Khorasan, ranks among the most important historical cities of Iran and also it is known for its saffron, barberry, rug and handmade carpet exports. Being close to the Afghanistan border, Birjand is located on the «Silk Road» of opium smuggled from Afghanistan on the way to Europe. Birjand also boasts of being the first city in Iran to have a modern water distribution system.

The economy of Birjand is agro-based and the city has also been recognized as the science and education hub in the east of Iran for its large numbers of universities and education centers.

Global registration of Akbarieh Garden on the UNESCO World Heritage List has contributed to the increase in the arrivals of tourists to the city. However, many attractions of the city including Hosseinieh Navvab, Mir Hassan Khan Mansion, Shokatieh School and Chaharderakht Mosque are still out of bounds for tourists.

The city also lacks adequate hotels and guesthouses to accommodate tourists.

The city has a dry climate with significant difference between day and night temperatures. It is a fast-growing city, thus becoming one of the major centers in the East of Iran.



Akbarieh Garden

Akbarieh Garden was registered on the World Heritage List under the name of Persian Gardens. The garden was included in the dossier of Persian Gardens because of its unique architecture. Trees that can thrive in hot weather including cedar and pine are found in large numbers in the garden.

A large mansion, dating back to the Qajar era, sits in the middle of the garden. The Mansion displays a mixture of Persian and European architecture.



Birjand Castle

Just like many Iranian cities situated in dry terrain, Birjand also has an ancient castle. The castles were served as military outposts to protect the cities against the sudden invasion of enemies.

The mud brick castle is located on top of a hill overlooking the ancient residential areas of Birjand.

The castle has undergone substantial renovation over the course of time. It has a traditional restaurant and a teahouse for serving visitors.





Shokatieh School

Shokatieh is not only one of the attractions of Birjand but is also one of the first modern educational centers established in Iran. The building is no longer used for educational purposes. It is open to public in certain days.

Band Darreh resort

Visitors to Birjand can spend hours in one of the most beautiful natural attractions of Iran named Band Darreh.



Shiraz



Shiraz is the sixth most populous city of Iran and the capital of Fars Province. In the 13th century, Shiraz became a leading center of the arts and letters, due to the encouragement of its ruler and the presence of many Persian scholars and artists.

Shiraz is known as the city of poets, literature, wine and flowers. It is also considered by many Iranians to be the city of gardens, due to the many gardens and fruit trees that can be seen in the city, for example Eram Garden.

Shiraz's climate has distinct seasons, and is overall classed as a hot semi-arid climate, though it is only a little short of a hot-summer Mediterranean climate (Csa). Summers are hot, with a July average high of 38.8 °C (101.8 °F).

With more than 25 malls and 10 bazaars, Shiraz is known as the easiest place for shopping in Iran and the Middle East. The Vakil Bazaar, one of the oldest bazaars in the world, is located in the old city center of Shiraz. Featuring beautiful courtyards, caravanserais, and bath houses, its shops are deemed among the best places in Shiraz to buy all kinds of Persian rugs, spices, copper handicrafts and antiques.

Shiraz has had major Jewish and Christian communities. The crafts of Shiraz consist of inlaid mosaic work of triangular design; silver-ware; pile carpet-weaving and weaving of kilim, called gilim and jajim in the villages and among the tribes.



The tombs of Hafiz and Saadi

The tombs of Hafiz, Saadi, and Khaju e Kermani (whose tomb is inside a mountain above the city's old Qur'an Gate) are considered as the tourist attractions. Other lesser known tombs are that of Shah Shoja' (the Mozafarid emir of Persia, and patron of Hafiz), and the Haft Tanan mausoleum, where seven Sufi mystics are buried. The Tomb of Baba Kuhi sits atop a mountain overlooking the city, and the tomb of Karim Khan Zand is at the Pars Museum of Shiraz.





The Eram Garden

The Eram Garden (Bagh-e Eram) in Shiraz is a striking location for visitors with a variety of plants as well as a historic mansion. Although the exact date of the construction of the garden is not clear, historical evidence suggests it was constructed during the Seljuk Dynasty on the orders of the celebrated Seljuk monarch Sanjar. Other historical Persian gardens are Afifabad Garden and The Museum of Weapons, Delgosha Garden and Jahan Nama Garden.

Arg of Karim Khan

The citadel of Arg of Karim Khan sits adjacent to the Vakil Bazaar and Vakil Bath at the city's central district. The most famous of houses are Zinat-ol-Molook House and Gahavam's House, both in the old quarters of the city.

