

# IRAN

## Doostan Tours

Tour and Resort Operator




# IRAN

The Land of Intact Nature  
and Ancient Culture





A person in silhouette stands on a rocky ridge in a desert, holding a camera up to take a picture. The landscape is filled with various rock formations and mesas under a vast, hazy sky at sunset. The entire scene is bathed in a warm, golden light.

*Everything in the universe is within you.  
Ask all from yourself."*

*Rumi, Persian poet*



# IRAN

Doostan Tours  
Tour and Resort Operator



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IRAN  
Doostan Tours  
Since 1990

Masjed-e-Vhakil (Vhakil Mosque) Shiraz

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## A MESSAGE FROM IRAN DOOSTAN MANAGING DIRECTOR

Iran Doostan Tours Co. Pjs. (IDT), founded in 1990, is one of the first Iranian tour operators. Iran Doostan literally means Iran lovers. As Iran is the cradle of one of the oldest civilizations in the world, it embraces a magnificent variety of cultural and natural attractions. 21 cultural and one natural UNESCO World Heritage sites makes Iran as one of the top destinations in the world. Iran's rich culture, history, architecture, and its unique natural sceneries and wildlife motivated us to establish this company to represent the beauties of Iran to the world.

As we have always been committed to Sustainable tourism principles, we established the first and only desert Eco-camp of Iran in 2010 by following the universal codes of CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) and SRB (Socially Responsible Business) is one of our developments for this matter. In 2014, Matinabad Eco-camp was recognized by UNDP as one of 18 best practices in sustainable (eco) tourism in the world, and in 2015 earned Dr. Taghi Ebtekar's award.

IDT participates in important events and shows around the world such as ITB, WTM London and Latin America, FITUR, SITC, MITT, BIT, BTL, COTTM, Top Resa, Dubai ATM, London Adventure Travel Show and Adventure Travel Show Washington and LA to present the real beauties of Iran that are ignored by negative western propaganda.

We successfully managed to achieve the "Iran tourism Industry Award of Excellence" in 2008 from Iran's Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts, and Tourism Organization. We were also selected as the best Iranian tour operator in 2017 by Iran's Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization (ICHHTO). Moreover, we were rewarded as the best Iranian tour operator in the years 2004, 2009, 2012, and 2015. In September 2017, we won the prize as the top Iranian tour operator. It is our pleasure that IDT has been the first and the only tour operator to win this national prize so far.

We owe all our accomplishments to the trust of our dear customers and it is truly the best achievement of all. It is our greatest pleasure to be your host and help you discover the beauties of this country and have one of the most fantastic trips of your life. My great team and I are here to help you plan a perfect holiday for you and your family.



Best Wishes

*M. Ali Vaghefi*  
Managing Director  
ali@irandoostan.com

## Board of Directors

Hadi Ashraf Vaghefi

IDT president, and managing director at Matinabad Eco-Resort

Saeed Azam

IDT product and promotion manager, and marketing manager at Iran Mice Services.

Mohammad Ali Vaghefi

IDT Managing director and senior vice president and cofounder at Iranian Tour Operators Association "ITOA".





# ABOUT

## IRAN DOOSTAN TOURS CO.PJS

Iran Doostan Tours Co. Pjs. (IDT) was founded in 1990. It started working professionally on inbound tourism in the fields of cultural, adventure, and MICE tours. With more than 27 years of experience in travel industry, it is one of the pioneers of tour operators in Iran. It offers a wide range of travel services including visa, hotel bookings, transfer, flight, tour, and tour guide in different languages. IDT is specialized in operating a variety of package and tailor-made tours such as cultural, adventure, nature, MICE, sport, and recently medical for individuals and groups. It also organizes Silk Road Tours, joint tours with CIS countries and the countries along the Silk Road.

IDT target markets are spread all over the world, but its main target markets include Spain, Portugal, Brazil, Germany, China, and Spanish language countries. To achieve the goals of UNWTO regarding sustainable and responsible tourism development, especially local community employment, IDT founded Matinabad Desert Eco-camp- the first and the only eco-camp of Iran- in 2010.

In 2014, Matin Abad Desert Eco-camp & Organic Farm was known as one of 18 best practices by UNDP in sustainable (eco) tourism initiated by governments, NGOs, and private sectors, in developing countries, including SIDS, with potentials for replication elsewhere. In 2015, Mr. M. Ali Ashraf Vaghefi, the managing director of Iran Doostan Tours, received Dr. Taghi Ebtekar International Award for establishing the first eco-resort in Iran.

Iran Doostan Tours Co. Pjs. has received various national and international awards during all these years. It was selected as the best Iranian tour operator in the years 2004, 2009, 2012, and 2015 by Iran Trade Promotion Organization. In September 2017, IDT won the prize as the top Iranian tour operator. It has been the first and the only tour operator to win this national prize so far. Moreover, it was selected as the best Iranian tour operator by Iran's Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization (ICCHTO) in 2017. It was also awarded the "Iran tourism Industry Award of Excellence" in 2008 by Iran's Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts, and Tourism Organization.

By providing the highest quality services and tours, IDT succeeded to attract the attention of its valid partners from different countries in all five continents.

Iran Doostan Tours Co. is also the exclusive agent for World Net Hotels - the leading hotel booking wholesaler - in Iran. IDT has DMCs in the cities of Berlin, Barcelona, and Beijing. Moreover, it is a member of United Federation of Travel Agents' Associations (UFTAA), The International Air Transport Association (IATA), The International Ecotourism Society (TIES), and Sustainable Travel International (STI).



The Excellence Iranian Tour Operator in 2017 Awarded by ICHHTO



Outstanding Iranian Tour Operator Awarded by Trade Promotion Organization of Iran in 2017

# A W A R D S



**2004**  
The Best Iranian Tour Operator  
Awarded by Trade Promotion  
Organization of Iran



**2008**  
Awards of Excellence  
by Iran Tourism Industry



**2009**  
The Best Iranian Tour Operator  
Awarded by Trade Promotion  
Organization of Iran



**2012**  
The Best Iranian Tour Operator  
Awarded by Trade Promotion  
Organization of Iran



**2013**  
The Best Iranian Tour Operator  
Awarded by Trade Promotion  
Organization of Iran



**2015**  
The Best Iranian Tour Operator  
Awarded by Trade Promotion  
Organization of Iran

Member of:





# OUR TEAM





# Tourism Impacts on Iran and the World

According to the report of UNWTO Tourism Highlights 2017, tourism has experienced growth and expansion over the past decades despite existing occasional shocks. Today, tourism is one of the largest economic sectors of the world, and new destinations have emerged beside the old favorite destinations of Europe and North America. The good news is that the highest increase of tourism in 2016 belonged to the regions of Africa, and Asia and the Pacific. Iran as a country located in the south Asia in the Asia and the Pacific region has also experienced an increase of international tourist arrivals over the past years. Moreover, the experts believe that the tourism industry of Iran will have a boost in the following years depending on the true realization of its tourism potential.

The statistics indicate that international tourist arrivals have increased from 25 million in 1950 to 1.235 million in 2016. Consequently, the international tourism receipts increased from US\$ 2 billion in 1950 to US\$ 1.220 billion in 2016. From 2016 to 2017, 6 million tourists have also travelled to Iran. In comparison to the previous year, it indicates an increase of more than %30 in the number of Iran's international tourist arrivals.

More international demand for travel, better connectivity, and more affordable air transport are among the factors influencing the growth of tourism. Fortunately, tourism

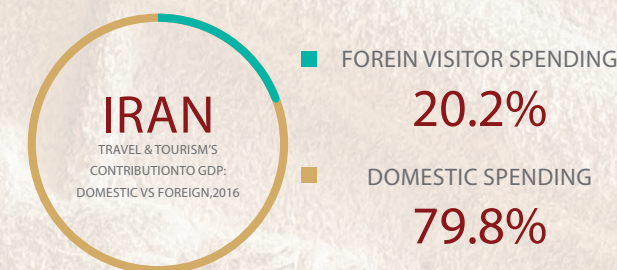
growth has a better rate in emerging destinations than the advanced economies. The interesting point is that Asia and Pacific showed growth in 2016 with a 9% increase in international arrivals. Iran is also planning to host 20 million tourists, spending \$30 billion by 2025. To achieve the purpose, it has provided new hotels, offered better services, and facilitated the process of issuing visa.

The reports of UNWTO and WTTC reveal that tourism growth has made 7% of world's exports and 10% of World's GDP. According to 2017 annual research on Iran tourism, the direct contribution of travel and tourism to GDP was IRR367,635.0bn(USD 11.9bn), 2.9% of total GDP in 2016 and is forecast to rise by 7.5% in 2017. Moreover, the total contribution of travel and tourism to GDP was IRR973, 880.0bn (USD31.5bn), 7.7% of GDP in 2016, and is forecast to rise by 6.6 in 2017.



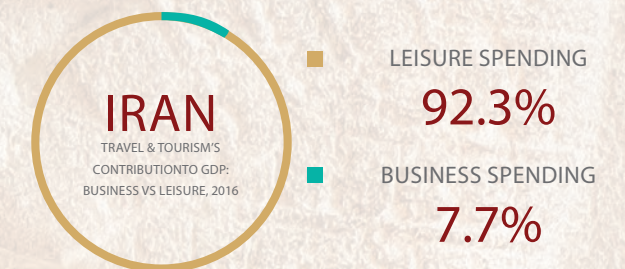
The international tourism growth has led to the increase of expenditure as well. The international visitors' expenditure includes factors such as food and drink, entertainment, accommodation, shopping, and so forth.

According to 2017 annual research on Iran, domestic travel spending generated 79.8% of direct Travel & Tourism GDP in 2016 compared with 20.2% for visitor exports (i.e. foreign visitor spending or international tourism receipts). Domestic travel spending is expected to grow by 6.5% in 2017 and visitor exports are expected to grow by 11.6% in 2017.



Tourism has also provided 1 job out of 10 in the field of tourism services. It is predicted that the international tourist arrivals would reach 1.8 billion by 2030. The annual research of 2017 indicates that in 2016 travel & tourism directly supported 559,500 jobs (2.2% of total employment) in Iran. This is expected to rise by 4.9% in 2017. Moreover, the total contribution of travel & tourism to employment in 2016, including jobs indirectly supported by the industry was 6.5% of total employment (1,624,500 jobs). This is expected to rise by 4.3% in 2017 to 1,695,000 jobs and rise by 1.5% pa to 1,964,000 jobs in 2027 (6.2% of total).

Regarding the purpose of visit in inbound tourism, the most portion of the share (53%) in 2016 belonged to tourism, Leisure, recreation and holidays followed by VFR, health, religion, others (27%), business and professional (13%), and not specified travels (7%). The annual research of 2017 indicates that in Iran, leisure travel spending (inbound and domestic) generated 92.3% of direct travel & tourism GDP in 2016 (IRR597,218.0bn) compared with 7.7% for business travel spending (IRR50,059.8bn). Leisure travel spending is expected to grow by 7.3% and business travel spending is expected to grow by 10.0% in 2017.



The following table summarizes the impact of tourism on different aspects such as GDP or employment in Iran.

IRAN	2016 USDbn <sup>1</sup>	2016 % of total	2017 Growth <sup>2</sup>	USDbn <sup>1</sup>	2027 % of total	Growth
Direct Contribution to GDP	11.9	2.9	7.7	16.6	2.7	2.6
Total Contribution to GDP	31.5	7.7	6.6	44.9	7.3	3.0
Direct Contribution to Employment	560	2.2	4.9	670	2.1	1.3
Total Contribution to Employment	1,624	6.5	4.3	1,964	6.2	1.5
Visitor Exports	4.2	4.5	11.6	6.6	3.7	3.4
Domestic Spending	16.7	4.1	6.5	22.9	3.7	2.5
Leisure Spending	19.3	2.7	7.3	26.0	2.4	2.3
Business Spending	1.6	0.2	10.0	3.4	0.3	6.8
Capital investment	3.5	3.3	6.3	6.2	3.9	5.3

The current report indicates that tourism plays an important role in achieving sustainable development goals such as no poverty, zero hunger, quality education, affordable and clean energy, peace and justice, and sustainable cities and communities. As tourism growth has positive effects on the future of countries especially the underdeveloped ones, it is crucial to help develop tourism in the world.



The image captures the interior of the Jame Mosque in Isfahan, Iran, showcasing its stunning Seljuk-era architecture. The ceiling and walls are covered in a dense, repeating pattern of blue and gold tiles, featuring floral and geometric motifs. The architecture is characterized by a series of pointed arches that create a sense of depth and height. The lighting is warm, highlighting the rich colors of the tiles and the texture of the stone. The overall atmosphere is one of historical grandeur and artistic mastery.

*If travel is most rewarding when it surprises,  
then Iran might be the most rewarding  
destination on Earth*

*Andrew Burke  
Lonely Planet Writer*



# Tourism Potentials and Investment Opportunities in Iran



According to UNWTO, tourism is the third largest export in terms of global earnings. It is also the largest service sector industry in the world, in terms of international trade. So, it is understandable why different countries try to do their best in seeking different new ways for growth and foreign investment attraction in tourism. Iran, as the seventeenth largest country in the world and the second largest country in the Middle East with an area of 1,648,195 km<sup>2</sup> is among the emerging economies whose tourism share in export earnings has been on the rise in recent years. Iran recorded a 5.6 increase in international tourist arrivals in 2016.

The economic activities generated by industries such as hotels, travel agents, airlines and other passenger transportation services, the restaurants, and leisure industries generated 559,500 jobs directly in 2016 (2.2% of total employment). This is forecast an increase of 1.3% pa over the next ten years. All these industries that totally contribute to GDP and employment in many ways are all good opportunities to invest in.

In 2016, Iran generated IRR130,525.0bn in visitor exports. By 2027, international tourist arrivals are forecast to total 9,858,000, generating expenditure of IRR203,623.0bn, an increase of 3.4% pa. Capital investment in travel & Tourism is expected to rise by 5.3% pa over the next ten years to IRR191,392.0bn in 2027. Leisure travel spending (inbound and domestic) generated 92.3% of direct Travel & Tourism GDP in 2016 (IRR597,218.0bn) compared with 7.7% for business travel spending (IRR50,059.8bn). They are expected to grow by 2.3% pa and 6.8% pa by 2027 respectively.

"Iran is a bright star. The potential is enormous when you consider where they are now, and what they could achieve in the near future. Iran is likely to become the leading tourism market in the Middle East and North Africa Region, provided the infrastructure is able to develop and cope with changes." Nikola Kosutic, Euromonitor Middle East head of research said.

## Iran Cultural Attractions and Heritage Sites

Iran, as the cradle of one of the most ancient civilizations of the world, is proud of its thousands year old historical, cultural, and architectural attractions, elegant gardens, pleasant food, and warm hospitable people. With 21 cultural heritage and one natural sites inscribed on UNESCO World Heritage List, Iran offers a unique diversity of attractions in the world: from Lut Desert to the Persian gardens; the amazing city of Isfahan to the hand-dug rocky houses in Meymand, Kerman; the towering mountain of Damavand covered in snow to Kish Island.



Iran, the country of wind catchers, Ab Anbars (water reservoir), Persian gardens, palaces, museums, caravanserais, bathhouses, bridges, mausoleums, castles, mosques, churches, monuments, bazaars, literature, science, history, poets, artists, kings, and scientists is a live museum of the culture, history, art, and architecture. Susa, Shushtar Hydraulic System, and Tchoghazanbil in Khuzestan as the birthplace of the Elamites, and Burnt City dating back to 3200 BC in Sistan and Baluchestan are among Iran cultural and heritage sites.



## Iran Events and Festivals

Different kinds of climate and the vast area of the country during a long history have caused a great diversity in language, custom, lifestyle, and handicrafts in different parts of the country. All this culminates in different events and festivals that could be among the best potentials for the foreign agencies and tourism companies to operate tours to different parts of Iran during the year. Nowruz all around Iran, Pir-e Shaliar in Kurdistan, Mehregan Festival Celebrated in Yazd and Kerman, and Golab Giri annual festival in Kashan are just some examples. Carpet weaving, metalwork, pottery, tile works, needle works, saffron, and pistachio are only some examples of the handicrafts and souvenirs. They are not only considered as cultural attractions, but also as trade products.



## Iran Natural Attractions

The vastness of the land has provided a diverse nature, from the humid forests on the north, to the dry deserts in central part, and the sub-tropical forests on the south. It has variable climate too. One can see freezing winter with heavy snowfall in the northwest and mild spring-like weather in the south at the same time. It makes it Iran as a destination for all four seasons of the year.

With more than 10,000 plants, 1,140 animals, and 500 bird species identified, Iran could be a great destination for the nature and animal lovers.

Hyrceanian forests of Iran dating back to the last stage of ice age as a green biology library, Ali-Sadr Cave in Hamadan, Badab-e Soort travertine terraces in Mazandaran, Gandom Beryan known as the hottest place on Earth and Kaluts of Shahdad in Lut Desert, Nishapur mines of turquoise, Sarv-e-Abarqu as the second oldest species of tree in the world in Yazd, Shamkhal Canyon, Qeshm Island as the only Geopark in the Middle East, mangrove trees and Star Valley in Qeshm Island, mud volcanoes and the Iranian Short-Muzzle crocodile named Gando in Sistan and Baluchestan, the Asiatic Cheetah, the Iranian Ground Jay as the endemic to Iran, Fritillaria imperialis as the endemic flower of Iran known by the name inverted tulip among Iranians, and Narcissus flower listed as a national treasure of Iran are among its natural attractions. There are 26 national parks, 35 national natural sites, 42 wildlife sanctuaries, and 150 protected areas in Iran.



## Ecotourism Activities

The unique mesmerizing but also fragile nature of Iran has brought environmental and tourism activists to try to manage the tourism industry in line with ecotourism and sustainable development. One successful example of eco-tourist accommodation is Matinabad Eco-camp as the first and the only eco-camp in Iran opened in 2010. It has been working with respect to all factors of sustainable tourism and development, and has won 2 international awards for its ecofriendly activities.



## Iran Adventure

Iran's breathtaking intact nature with its unique climatic and weather conditions provides a range of activities from skiing and hiking for adventurers in the Alborz mountains to the beaches by the Persian Gulf and the Caspian Sea. The two mountain chains, Alborz and Zagros, with summits over 4000m height and thirteen international ski pistes with long skiing season, like Dizin in north of Tehran, Shemshak, and Tochal- all in Alborz Mountains- are the best for the ski lovers and snowboarders.





Miankaleh peninsula in the Caspian Sea as the host of thousands of birds from Siberia is a favorite destination for the birdwatchers from around the world. Iran with more than 300 caves- such as the world's longest salt cave (Namakdan) and the deepest vertical cave (Parau)- could also be a good place for the cavers and spelunkers. Hiking, trekking, biking, canyoneering, wildlife watching, mountain climbing, rock climbing, and meeting nomads are all available in Iran for those who wish to experience adventure in the heart of the ancient culture. In fact, Alborz is a canyon-filled paradise for beginner and expert explorers.



Iran Canyoning

### Solo Female Travel and Family Vacations

It is worth mentioning that Iran is also a safe country for families, only women, and solo female travels; Because Iran benefits from a rich culture that is a combination of different religions, traditions, and beliefs that all emphasize the morality, the high position of family as the pillar of a healthy society, and high respect for women. So, it could be a good opportunity for foreign travel agencies to operate special tours regarding these groups of travelers.



### Iran Marine Tourism

Iran, contrary to what is supposed in many countries, is not merely a dry desert land! The Caspian Sea on the north and the Persian Gulf on the south are the natural borders of Iran. They could be best places for different kinds of water activities. Iran with nearly 2700 km water borders has the potential to attract three million foreign visitors annually. As marine tourism is currently responsible for just 1% of national employment and revenue, it could be a good opportunity for foreign investment in building marinas and tourist villages along the Persian Gulf coasts. The coasts of

Bandar Abbas, Siraf, Bushehr, and Kish and Qeshm Islands are top places for investment. Moreover, more than 90% of the world's caviar comes from the Caspian Sea. Besides the aforementioned, rivers are also proper places for water adventures such as whitewater rafting, kayaking, river trekking, scuba diving, snorkeling, and water skiing.

Geopolitically, Iran is located on way of the ancient Silk Road, between Central Asia and India on one hand and the Persian Gulf States, Turkey, and Europe on the other hand. It is like a land bridge that connects the East to the West. It has also access to the international waters. It could be a main point in tourism development.



Scuba Diving in Kish

### Iran Religious Tourism

Religious and holy places also enjoy such a wide diversity and appeal to the followers of different religions. About 5 millions of Muslim tourists visit Iran annually, of whom 3 million come from neighboring countries. Many Islamic holy places such as Mashhad and Qom attract non-Muslims because of their magnificent architectural features.



Imam Reza Shrine, Mashhad

Armenian Monastic Ensembles in West Azarbaijan province, Vank Cathedral in Isfahan, the Zoroastrian Pir-e-Sabz or Chak Chak pilgrimage place in Yazd, the Tomb of Daniel in Susa, and the Holy Shrine in Mashhad all satisfy the spiritual needs of the followers of different religions. Iran as a religious country with a combination of flourished Iranian-Islamic art and culture, and with holy shrines, with magnificent architecture, decoration and art work, welcomes millions of the pilgrims from around the world every year.

As Iran has been the land of other religions before Islam such as Zoroastrianism and Christianity, there are many holy places related to those religions in different parts of Iran. This could be a great opportunity for the tour operators to operate religious tours to Iran.





Moreover, Islamic culture has influenced the Asia and the Pacific tourism market and it is interesting for the tourists visiting the region. Therefore, the Asia-Pacific countries especially the Islamic ones should make marketing plans to attract more Muslim visitors. Developing religious tourism could result in promoting peace and intercultural understanding. Regarding this issue, Iran could attract many travelers interested in Islamic culture. The Islamic Republic of Iran enjoys the Islamic culture aging over 1400 years. The rich Islamic culture of Iran has affected its architecture and created unique structures such as Jameh Mosque of Yazd or Isfahan.

### Iran Halal Tourism

Growth in Muslim travel market- 145 billion dollars in 2014 and 117 million Muslim tourists that is expected to increase to 168 million tourists by 2020- resulted in the new concept of Halal Tourism. It means providing travel and tourism services in accordance with Muslim beliefs and practices such as serving no alcohol or pork products, and separate pools or spa facilities for men and women. Iran as an officially Muslim country and the home to the prominent Islamic figures' shrines could be a perfect destination for the travelers who wish to spend their holidays with respect to their cultural and religious beliefs. An advantage Iran has over other countries is that the whole country has been operating under Halal laws for the last thirty years.



### Iran Health Tourism

Iran has a high potential for health tourism too. Its highly equipped hospitals and rehabilitation centers offer a wide range of state-of-the-art facilities and treatment with experienced expert medical teams at reasonable costs. So, affordability is one of the main factors to entice patients to Iran. Treatment costs are much lower comparing to the developed countries, southeastern Asian countries, and Iran's regional competitors like the Persian Gulf States. Iran enjoys a unique combination of pleasant climate, splendid natural sceneries, relaxing villages, hot (mineral) springs and spas in different parts such as Sar'eyn in Ardabil, highly advanced medical centers and hospitals, up to date medical technology, suitable infrastructure, and well equipped accommodations. There is also a hotel hospital in Tehran,

the capital of Iran. Iran has experienced a growth of 10% in health tourism in 2016-2017. Thousands of visitors from different countries travel to Iran annually for plastic surgery, heart surgery, eye surgery, stem cell treatment, organ transplants, artificial insemination, and other surgeries and medical treatments. Iran also offers high quality medical care in Cardiology, dentistry, rheumatology, nephrology, neurology, dermatology, gynecology, urology, orthopedics, otolaryngology, hematology, gastroenterology, and many other branches of medicine. Iran is also one of the top countries in biotech. Many private hospitals in cities like Tehran, Shiraz and Mashhad provide accommodation facilities for the tourists too. Investing in the area of medical facilities and equipment could be a good opportunity for foreign investors.



### Iran MICE Tourism

Iran has also potentials for MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibition) tourism; since business travelers use travel services such as hotel facilities and other amenities like restaurants, souvenir shops and local tourist spots. All these sectors could be considered as an area for development and investment. According to the estimation of the International Trade Center, MICE tourism accounts for about 9 percent of all tourism and business people spend approximately twice as much as leisure tourists. In Iran, business tourism is increasing too. Iran not only attends in different well-known prestigious International tourism exhibitions, but also holds different tourism exhibitions to provide a place for discussing business opportunities, meeting industry professionals, creating a network with exhibitors, and signing contracts.



### International Hotel Groups and Airlines in Iran

After lifting sanctions, though the US has still sanctions in place, some hotel groups and international airlines focused on the Iran's promising Tourism market. The French Accor group was the pioneer in 2016. The others include the UAE's Rotana and Spain's Melia. British Airways also started daily flights to Iran. Today, there are direct flights from the major cities in Europe and the Middle East to Iran.

Iran, in response, is trying to develop its infrastructure. It could be a good opportunity for other countries as more investment is still needed. For example, Iran has increased the capacity of its airports in different cities and has bought some planes too. The Internet infrastructure such as online payment systems could also attract the capital of information and technology companies for investment. Iran's Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization (ICHHTO) has allocated some incentives for foreign investment on tourism infrastructures such as granting license and banking facilities, tax exemption, discounts, guarantee of foreign investment under the law on encouragement and protection of foreign investments.

### Technology in Iran Tourism

In the era of technology, Iran is trying not to stay away from the global development. Nowadays, there are many online booking and reservation systems to offer services round the clock. Some online market places take benefits of 360° virtual tours and some museums take advantage of augmented reality. There is also a hi-tech restaurant in Tehran where the meals are served by use of robots at the multi-touch smart tables. So, investing in technology and its required infrastructures in Iran could bring about the investors a great fortune.

Iran with an extended diverse in culture, ecotourism, skiing, and spa can offer a vast range of attractions to different age groups. Iran is planning to attract 20 million tourists annually by 2020 that it could generate 30 billion dollars in revenues. Moreover, in comparison to other regional destinations, Iran is a safe destination. Issuing Iran visa on arrival with 30 day validity for the tourists from more than 70 countries has made the visa procedure much easier for the tourists too. The Iranian Rial devaluation has also made it an inexpensive destination.

Iran Doostan Tours Co. Pjs. with nearly three decades of knowledge and experience is eagerly ready to provide investment advice for those who are inclined to invest in the developing tourism market in Iran and to benefit from its extensive opportunities. We can provide unbiased financial advice, and make recommendations on the securities for a fee. We aim to make you relieved of the worry about managing your investment.





A woman with long brown hair, wearing a black headscarf and a blue patterned top, is smiling and looking towards the camera. She is standing in front of a vibrant, colorful mosaic wall. The mosaic features a repeating pattern of stylized flowers, leaves, and birds in shades of blue, yellow, orange, and green. The text "GUEST EXPERIENCE" is overlaid in white, bold, sans-serif font on the right side of the image.

# GUEST

EXPERIENCE



# IRAN BEAUTIES

## THROUGH THE EYES OF A TOURIST

*This guest experience was sent to us by our dear partner 'Kazim Uzunoglu' in Turkey on behalf of one of his American guests traveling to Iran.*

Overall I really enjoyed the program. The number of participants was just right. The bus was excellent (and the driver) for the long distance rides. The visit to Qom was special. The guides were funny and handled unexpected events and changes quickly. The campfire was a fun change. The dramatic performance in Yazd was a wonderful surprise and addition as was the visit to the wrestling center. The Turkish tour guide, group leader was Yasemin Akhenaten Bulbul. She did an excellent job, worked well with the Iranian guide, was attentive to individuals' needs and helped make the trip fun. She also helped explain the difference between Sunni and Shia and about Turkish life and perspective.





In general, it was a wonderful trip. Our Turkish guide, Yasemin, was terrific. The bus was comfortable and the driver was quite experienced. Our interaction with local people, though limited, was warm and friendly, and even more of it would have been appreciated. Almost all of the sites we visited were astonishing and very unique.

Good balance of activities and excursions. Tehran was enjoyable nonetheless, and the heart of modern Iran.

It was interesting and unusual to get this opportunity to visit Iran.

The ancient sites, the mosques and the bazaars were great.

We were happy to have Qom included. The lecture in Qom was very interesting.

I liked that we started in Shiraz rather than Tehran. I liked the Eco Camp, Abyaneh Village, Isfahan. A very supportive friendly two guides. The beautiful mosques and palaces. A very interesting group of fellow travelers.

The selection of sites and venues that provided a gratifying overview of a vast historical record of ancient Persia and today's Iran. The multiple sites visited per day were precisely coordinated and timed for the best experience possible in crowded conditions. The program was able to accommodate itself to an ancient, highly developed civilization with cross-culturalization with invaders from west, north and east. A great deal of visual and cerebral experiences were fit into each daily schedule making for an enriched adventure.

Both Nadi Masoumzadeh and Yasemin worked synchronously to keep a steady pace. Much of the

historic and esthetic content was presented by Nadi. Both "herded" us quickly through crowded palaces and museums and safely across jaywalked multi-laned traffic, the standard operating procedure for pedestrians in Iran.

Iran held many surprises--the large educated middle class, the positive attitude of ordinary people toward Americans, the scale of Persepolis and Safavid Isfahan which cannot be conveyed adequately through photographs or film. Even the "horror" of contemporary Tehran's traffic that beats out Beijing and makes Washington D.C.'s traffic problems non-existent, was interesting to observe. Although I don't speak Farsi, the use of endearing honorifics in Iranian English comes from their language and everyone in our group felt the warmth and courtesy of all with whom we came in contact.

I enjoyed the broad overview of Iranian culture. I especially like Persepolis and Isfahan. The campfire at the Eco Camp was fun, thanks to our 2 outgoing leaders and 2 young women from Tehran who were traveling alone and joined us for the campfire. Road Scholar participants should be asked (in their travel information) to prepare a song, an anecdote or a poem to recite. We couldn't find one song--not even "Take me out to the ballgame" that everyone could sing.

My group left the US on October 19 and returned on Nov. 4. Our Turkish tour guide was Yasemin Akhun Bulbul. Nadi (Nadire) was warm and fun. She is a lovely person and added greatly to our experience. The story of her own situation as an independent unmarried woman (and the father who permitted it) added to our



understanding of contemporary Iran. The people on my tour were wonderful and I made new friends with whom I will keep in contact. We were a very congenial group. A few people were not up to the trip physically (sight, deafness and other health problems), but our leaders and the other travelers helped them. I would have liked better teaching, but it was a wonderful trip and I would go again on a more specialized adventure to other parts of Iran or one focusing on Art and Architecture. There are Art universities in Iran with professors of architecture, traditional and modern painting etc. who could speak to such a group.

The sights were fascinating, even though I have been in many other Muslim countries. The sights - the grand mosques and palaces. Fascinating, memorable, colorful, amazing. The people - their dress and interest in us and their friendliness. The visit to the home of the family. The talk about the Muslim religion given by the professor, while we sat around a table. The bazaars, but not enough time was provided for us to look around on our own. The library we visited where a gentleman gave us a very long, long talk about the books in every showcase. After five minutes I had had enough of looking at the old books, and we were there at least an hour.

The people were the most interesting to me, and many of them wanted and were able to talk to us in English.









# IRAN

## POWER TO HER PEOPLE!

Lisa Spratling

*"You are going where!?" "Are you crazy?" "Why would want to go there?" "Is it safe?" "Iran – are you joking?" "Don't you need to be fully covered up as a woman?"*

*Classic questions I got when I proudly told people I was going to Iran. Strangely very few people said: "Aren't you lucky?" "The people are absolutely lovely" "Oh I've always wanted to go there" "How wonderful to wear colourful tunics and a headscarf on holiday!"*



For me, Iran had been a distant dream for my whole life. As a child I ordered biryani in a local Indian restaurant and was proudly told "Good choice. However biryani isn't traditionally Indian but more of a wedding dish from Ancient Persia." From that moment I was hooked. Where was Ancient Persia? To me it conjured up childhood images of flying carpets, tempting food, amazing architecture, snow-capped mountains, colourful gardens and beautiful people wearing exotic clothes! They may have been childhood images – but the reality is – this is Iran today. The good news is all of the above including every delicious meal is included in the holiday but flying carpets are an optional extra!

Always find the true beauty of group travel is the people you meet along the way and luckily I was travelling with a group of fellow experienced travelers who were all open-minded and easy going plus more than ready and waiting to welcome what surprises Iran may have in store. Yes, we were all wildly excited about climbing Damavand and seeing Iran's incredible cities, but mostly we were curious about the people. The first time we heard "Where are you from?" we said "Denmark, Scotland, England and America!" Due to the negative publicity Iran receives from the U.K and U.S we thought we should play it safe by listing each nationality in a "low-risk" order. We quickly received a warm "welcome to Iran" before been "kidnapped" for a selfie...the first of many.



It is impossible to put into a few words the hospitality we received in Iran. I lost count the number of times I sat in a Persian garden and within seconds was surrounded by wonderful families and their polite children asking for photos. Or the 11 year old Chess Grand Master who asked if she could join me because she was wearing a blue decorated headscarf and I was too. The charming young Iranian boys in the Albroz Mountains climbing Alam Kuh who sneakily gave us ladies sweets without the guys knowing. The smiling waiter who delivered complimentary Turkish coffee because I asked "How do you prepare it?" Or the charismatic cleric who granted us a "questions and answer" session on Islam after handing round sweets. However one of my favourite "people" moments was the wonderful elderly man in Isfahan who despite my strong Yorkshire accent proudly announced "how lovely you speak the Queen's English."

Iran gets under your skin because of the welcoming people and for any ladies who feel "you need to be fully clothed" The "hijab" or simple headscarf is a colourful part of Iranian culture and you can't help feeling like "one of the girls" when it's teamed with a colourful tunic, large sunglasses, trousers or jeans and a pair of sandals! Life in the mountains whilst trekking is more relaxed so KE's itinerary offers the perfect way to go from high-altitude hiking clothes to a spot of city chic!

Will I return to Iran? Without a doubt as the country and its friendly population offers the warmest welcome on the planet. Plus it's not every day a Yorkshire lass is told she speaks like royalty!







# EVERYTHING WE HAVE BEEN TAUGHT ABOUT IRAN IS WRONG

John & Kathleen

For the record we are not Iranian experts. We are interested in the country and have done a bunch of reading, of both historical and current events, and are also going off what Iranians told us while we were traveling.

A quick comment also on the politics of US-Iranian relations. Support of the militias in Iraq during the war led to 100s of American soldiers being killed and wounded. Many Americans are still angry about the embassy hostage crisis in 1979. From the Iranian perspective the British and Americans have been committing crimes against their country for over 100 years now. In 1906 the Iranians electoral legislature was overthrown violently by the British and Russians in a deal to control the countries resources which led to Iran being given only 16% of the profits from its own oil. Again in 1953, when the democratically elected prime minister tried to nationalize Iran's oil the government was overthrown in a joint CIA/MI6 operation. While everyone complains about the Russians hacking of the recent election they forget that the US has a long history of just outright overthrowing governments it doesn't like. What we were to find in Iran is that the people did not hold the actions of our government against us. We were told many times "You are not your government and we are not our government."

Our trip was a combination of ski mountaineering and cultural tour which made our experience wider than if we had just gone sightseeing. The first and maybe hardest part about going on a trip to Iran is getting permission, especially in these times of travel bans. The visa application process took the better part of two months. We had to fill out forms with our flight information, who we were going to meet, where we were going to stay, and what countries we had already traveled to. We had to send a resume where they could look at our past work experience. The paperwork initially gets sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Tehran who then sends you a Visa Authorization Number if you qualify. Once this number is obtained you send your passport to the Pakistani Embassy since the US and Iran do not have diplomatic relations. Our passports were on a desk there when the first Trump travel ban came out. Iran decided that with the ban that they would play the same game and not issue any visas to Americans while the Iranians were banned. They did take the higher road and said that they would honor the visas that had already been issued. We beat the ban by about 2 days.

The other hoop that Americans (and British and Canadians) have to jump through is that they have to have a special "ABC" certified guide with them at all times. No independent travel is allowed for these 3 nationalities. Since we wanted to climb and ski the highest mountain in Iran (and the highest volcano in Asia) it meant that we had to find an ABC guide who was capable of doing the mountain with us. We had also been warned that the dates we would be there would fall during Nowruz (Persian New Year) which meant

that it would be very busy and many of the hotels would be booked up. We emailed 5 different tour companies and went with Iran Doostan Tours who told us that it would not be a problem for them to arrange this. They were not the cheapest company (or the most expensive) but they were always very prompt with their email replies, confident that they could make all the pieces of our trip work including getting the visas, and had the most detailed itinerary of any of the companies we contacted. We were very pleased with them as our trip went flawlessly.

The customs guys were really friendly. We were stamped and waved through with a hearty "Welcome to Iran". A good first impression.

On the other side of baggage claim we met our first guide. "Mountain Amir" turned out to be one of the top Iranian rock climbers in the country.

His English wasn't great but was good enough to understand each other. We spent the first 2 days skiing Dizin which is the biggest ski resort in Iran. Iran has over 20 ski areas, though most are tiny. The gondolas at Dizin were the tiniest ones we had ever been in. They opened and closed like a clamshell. The first time we got on we discovered something about skiing in the 70s. Back then skis were narrow. Once we figured out the lifts we had a great time skiing. There was fresh snow and unlike any of the resorts in the US that get skied out within hours. There was fresh tracks to be had all day. The base of the mountain is at 9000' with the top of the lifts being around 12,000'. It was a good place to start acclimating for Damavand.

To get to Damavand we took the scenic route on the north side of the Alborz Mountains so that we could drive through the forests there and stick our toes into the Caspian Sea. Damavand holds a special place in the hearts and mythology of the region. In the Zoroastrian religion (the pre-Islamic religion) there was a 3-headed dragon chained within the mountain. In later legends the monster was changed to an evil Arab tyrant named Zahhak who was locked in the mountain after being defeated. It is not a technical mountain but the weather there can be fierce and we were told on a bad year up to 20 people have died. We had 4 days to attempt the mountain. 2 to get up, 1 to get down, with an extra day in case of bad weather.

The weather was the nicest on our first day though the upper mountain was covered by a lenticular cloud which signified high winds. The sun was shining on the lower mountain but as we climbed higher we moved up into the lenticular cloud and the wind became pretty fierce. Halfway up to the shelter at 14,000' we passed the Saheb al Zaman Mosque. Having a gold domed mosque appear out of the mist and blowing snow on the side of a big mountain was a unique sight.

There was a shack next to it that provided some shelter from the wind so that we could eat lunch. From there up to the Bargah Shelter the conditions became worse and worse. At the very end we were starting to get cold and it was going to be dark soon. According to John's altimeter we were a few hundred feet above where the shelter was reported and started to wonder if we had overshot but Amir knew exactly where we were going and led us straight to the shelter.

The first couple of days there was no one around besides a couple of Frenchmen and 2 Spaniards so we were able to hang out in the kitchen with the other guides and the two





Afghani caretakers. It was -7C in the hut but the kitchen was warm if you didn't mind a little bit of gas fumes. We spent the next 2 days making attempts at the summit. The first attempt was our best shot. We made it to just above 15,000' when the snow conditions became much icier and the wind picked up. Going any further would have been dangerous so we turned around there. No one else got that high while we were up there except for the 2 French who got about 500' higher and an intense Iranian who soloed up the ridge in crampons (everyone else was on skis) and summited. He was the only one to get to the top over a 3 week period. The second day had even crazier wind so we just skied runs above the hut in whiteout ground blizzard conditions. This was all the time we had so on the 4th day we had to ski down. This ended up being an excellent run. The storm had left 6 inches of fresh snow so we were able to ski from the hut all the way back to the road with only a few 100 meter sections where we took skis off to get across rocks. While not summiting was a disappointment we had a great time skiing and meeting people. Sporty mountain people are the same inside no matter what country they are from.

The second week was our cultural tour. We thought it was going to be about seeing the sights and history of Iran. It ended up being all about the people of Iran. There are a ton of places and things to see. It really would take a month to do the country justice so we had to pick out some of the highlights. We ended up visiting Shiraz, Persepolis, Isfahan, Abyaneh, the desert around Matinabad, Kashan, Qom, and Tehran. We initially flew from Tehran to Shiraz where we met our guide, also named Amir.

A lot of Iranians watch Western TV so they know what the West thinks of them and are well informed on what is going on in the world. 'Cultural Amir' spoke excellent English and turned out to be somewhat of an Iranian Renaissance man. He knew a lot about all sorts of topics. It was awesome having a translator. Many Iranians spoke English but it was helpful to talk to those that did not or only spoke limited English. Over the course of the two weeks we were there we talked to over 500 Iranians and had 100% positive interactions. All of them were friendly. This even included religious people. While exploring the mosques, bazaars, ancient archeological sites, restaurants, and streets of the different cities it was the interactions with the people that stand out the most.

Also in Kashan while exploring the Fin Gardens we were approached by a radio station that was broadcasting from there that wanted to interview the American tourists. We were asked how we were finding Iran, what foods had we tried, what sites had we seen in Kashan and what did we think of the city, and did we know any words in Farsi. Nowruz meant that all the Iranians were traveling to see their own country so we were able to meet people from every corner of the nation, not just the tourist cities we were in. Nowruz also meant that there was a lot of other stuff going on that wouldn't have been otherwise. We were able to see multiple traditional bands, a dance troupe, a puppet show, and comedian acts.

Despite being warned not to travel at that time it actually ended up being a great time to travel though the tourist sites were full of people.

Iran felt very safe to us. It is a police state and crime is dealt with very harshly. The biggest crime problem in Iran is the transit of drugs from Afghanistan on the way to Europe. Iran is still sanctioned from international banking so credit cards

and ATMs do not work there. Travelers have to bring cash to cover their expenses so pickpocketing/bag snatching is the biggest risk but even that seemed unlikely. The most dangerous part of Iran is without a doubt the roads. This leads to over 20,000 traffic deaths a year though recently there have been speed cameras placed everywhere which has helped lower the death toll. When crossing the street it is recommended to cross at the same time as a local and let them be on the upstream side of the cars.

We met no anti-American sentiment. The Iranians had seen on TV that there were millions of Americans protesting against the travel ban and felt that chanting "Death to America" was rude to all the people that were supporting them.

The landscape is diverse and breath taking at times. The food (it felt like a cross between Turkish and Indian to us) was delicious and healthy.

The pre-history period there goes back to 7000 BCE and the written history goes back to 3000 BCE. It is one of the original civilizations so the layers of history up to the present are mind boggling.

It is culturally diverse with many people being surprised that Christians and Jews are protected by their Constitution and guaranteed seats in the Parliament. It is a modern and sophisticated society.

Charity is a big part of their culture. All over the country (even in remote places on the side of the road) one sees metal charity boxes where people contribute money for orphans and the poor.

The landscape, food, history, and culture were all fascinating but it was hands down the one on one interaction with the people that made this trip so special. The first few days we were nervous about saying we were American but by the end of the trip we were proud to admit it. People went out of their way to be nice to us and to show that the true Iran had nothing to do with the hyperbole that is seen on TV. If you are able to go we highly recommend seeing Iran for yourself. It truly is one of the most special places we have ever traveled to.





# CULTURAL Tours







# PERSIA

## THE MULTI-CULTURE ANCIENT CIVILIZATION

Iran is one of the most ancient civilizations in the world. The vast area of the country has led to an amazing great variety of cultures, traditions, customs, languages, and lifestyles. Moreover, it is situated in such a geographical location that you can see different kinds of climate in different parts of country at the same time. Sitting on a critical spot and connecting west and east as a bridge, Iran has always been the center of attention for culture lovers. The unique cultural (as well as natural) features of Iran have motivated different Iranian tourism professionals to operate different varieties of culture tours to let the world know more about one of the oldest civilized cultures of the world and to attract tourists from all around the world to the wide range of Iran's attractions.

Iran Doostan Co. Pjs. (IDT), founded in 1990, started working by operating cultural tours. So, the culture tours department is the first and the oldest department of the company. At first, it was operated on classic cultural route that included well-known cities of Iran such as Isfahan, Shiraz, Kashan, Yazd, etc. for their historic architectures and UNESCO World Heritage Sites. The mentioned cities are known as the most prominent popular tourism destinations.

During years of experience and through the study of global tourism trends and market research, IDT developed its cultural tours to a wide range of cultural tours with different themes. Today, with a wealth of experience, IDT pays attention to different kinds of customers' requirements more than ever by designing a superb range of special interest tours (SIT) and offering tailor-made tours as well as classic-route cultural tours. It delivers architectural, educational, Persian culinary, local house or community, music, painting and other traditional or modern arts, nomadic, and religious tours providing high quality services.

IDT benefits from both professional staff and tour guides in its culture department to run its successful projects in order to accomplish its mission in the world tourism industry.



# ETHNIC GROUPS IN IRAN

Iran as the cradle of one of the most ancient civilizations in the world is a country of great diversity in ethnic groups. Though the majority of Iranians are Persian, there are still many people from different ethnic, linguistic, cultural, and religious backgrounds living in Iran. Though all these groups have their own traditions, customs, languages, clothes, and lifestyles, they are all called Iranians and all live as a large united community. Such diversity among various ethnic groups not only adds to the richness of Iran's culture, but also could be considered as one of the surpassing beauties of Iran that has made the country as a live museum.

Before getting to know them as separate groups, we should keep in mind that all these groups are spread over the whole country and the following provinces are just the main centers they are living. Moreover, they all speak Persian as the official language.

**Persians or Fars people:** They are the largest ethnic group in Iran. They speak Farsi or Persian as Iran's official language in different accents. Most Persians are Shia Muslims. They mostly live in large cities and make the most part of urban population.

## Azerbaijanis or Azeris

This group is largely Shia Muslims. They mainly reside in West and East Azerbaijan provinces in the northwest of Iran close to the border with Azerbaijan. Ardabil and Zanjan are two other main cities they live in. They are scattered throughout other parts of Iran as well. They speak Azeri that is similar to the Turkish spoken in the Republic of Azerbaijan and nearly similar to Turkish spoken in Turkey.

Azerbaijani cuisine enjoys distinctive features. Koofteh Tabrizi (meatballs made of meat, rice, split peas, and herbs), Dolmeh (minced lamb, rice, aromatic greens wrapped in vine or cabbage leaves), Dovga (the yogurt-based soup), Dushbara (broth made up of dumplings stuffed with minced lamb and herbs), and Bonab kebab are well-known traditional cuisine.

Azeri costume is different among married and unmarried women respecting the marital status. It is not popular in modern cities anymore. It is mostly worn in villages and traditional ceremonies nowadays. For example, the dancers wear Azeri traditional costume while performing the traditional Azeri dance. Women usually wear wide pants or skirt, a long-sleeved shirt, and a cloak. Youngers wear more colorfully clothes. Chukha (upper men's wear), Kurk (fur coat), Papaq (headwear), and wide pants- wide enough to ride a horse- are some examples of men's outward.

A famous traditional Azerbaijani folk music is performed by Ashiqs (the itinerants) playing kopuz- a stringed musical instrument. Azeri traditional dances enjoy a great diversity. They are usually characterized by fast rhythm.

## Kurds

The majority of the population of Kurdistan province is composed of Kurd people. They have much in common with Kurds in Turkey and Iraq. They are mostly Sunni Muslims. They speak in Kurdish language. Rural Kurds are nomadic pastoralists.

One of Kurdish tribes named Feyli live in the provinces of Kermanshah and Ilam. They are mostly Shia Muslims. All three provinces mentioned above are located on the northwest of Iran; however, another Kurdish tribe named Kurmanji lives mainly in North Khorasan province on the northeast of Iran. Some also live in the western part of the country.

Kurdish men and women still wear traditional clothes in daily life. Kurdish men usually wear a suit including a matching jacket and baggy pants that become tight at the ankles called pantol. They twist a sash around their waists. They also wrap Keffiyeh around their heads. Its color and the way it is wrapped vary based on the geographical area. Women usually wear a vest or long-sleeved jacket and a belt over a gown. Some wear hats ornamented with gold or coins. Younger women wear colorful dresses adorned with sequins or beads.

Kurdish music and songs reflect epics, love and separation. They play music with different traditional musical instruments such as tambour, dohol, and kamancheh. Kurdish men and women dance together hand in hand in circle in different ceremonies. They dance in all of their festivals, and their rhythmic movements originate from their ancient history, lifestyle, beliefs, and wars. Taking hands is the symbol of unity among them during old history. Kurdish diet includes different kinds of fruits and vegetables. Rhubarb stew, conger stew, and chives stew are some examples of Kurdish cuisine.

## Lors or Lurs

They inhabit Lorestan or Luristan, Khuzestan, Isfahan, Fars, Bushehr, Kuh-Gilu-Boir Ahmad, and Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari provinces on the west and southwest of Iran. Most Lurs are Shia Muslims. They speak Luri. Many of Lurs are nomadic pastoralists. Rural Lurs form different tribes. One of the main and large groups of Lurs is called Bakhtiari. It's one of the three Lur groups that all together are called the Great Lur. There is controversial on their origin among scholars. Some say they are of Kurdish origin.

Lurish music is so diverse. From among different traditional musical instruments played in ceremonies, Sorna and Dohol are more popular. Lurish people dance in different ceremonies such as wedding, harvesting, and mourning. Lurish dance is usually done in group including both men and women wearing traditional colorful clothes. The most common dance is Dastmal Bazi or handkerchief



dance. Men or women wave colorful cloths while dancing. Another dance is Chub Bazi or twig dance that brings a single combat to mind. The dance men and women dance hand in hand in a circle is called Choupi.

Lurish clothes enjoy such a great diversity among different Lur subgroups that it could be considered as a cultural attraction; however, there are still some pieces common among them. Men usually twist a sash around their waists. They usually wear a knee-length garment, a felt hat, Giva- handmade shoes made of spun yarn, and Chuqha- made of sheep wool worn mainly by Bakhtiari. Women usually wear long collarless dress named Juma, Kolonja- a lace garment worn over clothes usually embroidered with coins, a silk fabric used for covering their heads, and a colorful patterned head scarf named Golvani that is worn in celebrations. Golvani celebration is held annually on May 16th.

Boroujerdi kebab and kebab Bakhtiari are two of the most famous kebabs in Iran.

Mazandarani or Mazani: They reside in the south cost of the Caspian Sea, the north part of Iran. They speak Mazandarani dialect. Many of them are fishermen or farmers. They have much in common with neighboring Gilaki people. Mazani traditional clothes are very colorful inspired by surrounding nature. Women usually wear a pleated skirt, named Shalite, over their pants in local dances and ceremonies. Men's clothes differ by their job and the region they live.

Mazandarani's cuisine is much similar to Gilani's. Pomegranate paste is an important element in both Mazandarani and Gilani traditional cuisine. Nazkhatoon and Morgh Torsh (sour chicken stew) are two of famous Mazandarani foods.

Some of the traditional ceremonies in Mazandaran are: A 600-year-old ceremony called Varf Chal that is held every year in May. During the event, only women stay in the village taking over everything, and the men go out of the village to carry the remained pieces of winter snow into the pits under the ground. No man is allowed to stay in the village, except the old ones. They believe it will provide the earth and animals with water in summer. Nakhil Gardani is another ceremony held across Mazandaran every year in Ashura. Nowruz Mah celebration is held in early August after the first harvesting of rice.

### Gilakis

They are native to Gilan province on the south and southwest coastal region of the Caspian Sea. They play a main role in Iran economy by fishing, exporting caviar, and animal husbandry, producing silk, and supplying a large part of agricultural products such as rice, tea, and grains. They speak Gilaki dialect.

Gilak women seldom wear black dresses, even in mourning ceremonies. Only elderly women sometimes wear black lachak- traditional head cover. Women of the eastern part of Gilan wear mandil- a coin decorated hat worn under the scarf. They wear Shaliteh- a pleated short skirt- over wide pants. They also wear long skirts with horizontal stripes at the bottom .They wrap chador kamar- a checkered cloth- around their waist while farming or carrying babies on their back. Men wrap a wide cotton belt around their waists.

Gilan province is so rich and diverse in cuisine that Rasht, the capital city of Gilan, designated as UNESCO creative city of gastronomy. Some well-known foods include: Baghali Ghatogh, Mirza Ghasemi, Morgh Torsh (sour chicken literally), Kabab Torsh (sour kebab literally), Kateh Kabab (rice without Tahdig and kebab), and Zeytoon Parvardeh (olives marinated in Pomegranate paste). As many Gilani foods include no meat, they could be best choices for vegetarians. Pomegranate paste is an important element in Gilani traditional cuisines. Fish and seafood are very popular in both Gilan and Mazandaran. Mahi Sefid (literally white fish) in Gilan is very famous all around Iran. Gilan is also the most well-known region for Koloocheh (one of Iranian traditional sweets).

Nowruz Khani- or singing for Nowruz- is a ceremony held in the last days of winter. The singers sing the poems about coming of the spring while going to the doors of the houses and usually collect some gifts from people. Gileh-Mardi wrestling is usually done in summer or in wedding ceremonies. It is the symbol of bravery and courage. Gilani music is very diverse across the province.

### Arabs

Most Arabs live in Khuzestan, Bushehr, and Hormozgan provinces southwest of Iran, along the Iran-Iraq border, on the Persian Gulf islands or along the coast. Many of them are Shia Muslims; the others are Sunni. They speak Arabic.

Their cuisine is mostly made of dates, rice, meat, and seafood. Fish is so popular and it is usually served with rice. Falafel, Sambusa, and Ghalieh Mahi (fish stew) are their well-known savory dishes.

Arab men traditionally wear Dishdasha- an ankle-length long-sleeved robe usually in white color- or Guthra, and Keffiyeh- the headdress. Women usually wear aba or jilbab or chador- a loose black robe covering the body from head to toe, and veil. Tattoo is prevalent among Arab females. Those living along the Persian Gulf are called Bandari. Their clothes are different. Women wear colorful clothes and some of them wear masks. Men usually wear white long tunic and sandals.

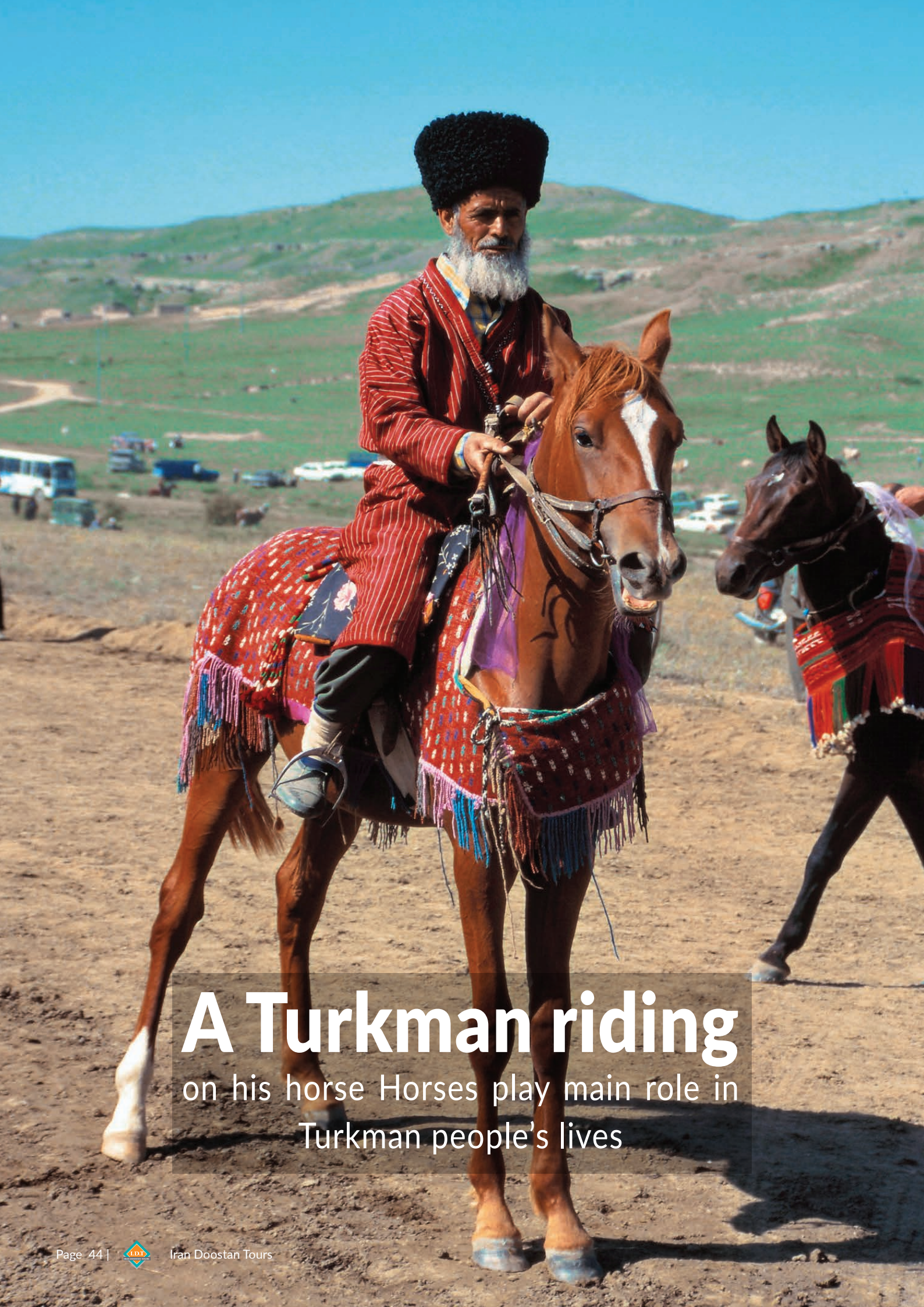
Iranian Arabs have their own music called Bandari. It is characterized by strong fast beat. It is usually accompanied by a fast moving dance. Arab sword dance is performed in

# A Gilaki woman

## playing daff, the traditional Iranian musical instrument







# A Turkman riding on his horse Horses play main role in Turkman people's lives

special ceremonies in Khuzestan too.

Coffee ritual in Khuzestan has inscribed as a national heritage. It is done in a Mozif- an arched shape structure made out of bamboo sticks.

## The Baluch

Baluch people live mainly in Sistan and Baluchestan province on the south east of Iran. They speak Baluchi language (though some linguists consider it as an accent). Baluch people are predominantly Sunni Muslims. They are divided into a number of tribes that the most important ones include Riggi, Shahbakhsh, Naroyee, and Barahooyee. The old traditions and customs play a main role in Baluch people's lives.

Both men and women wear special kind of clothes in harmony with the climate of the region and their surrounding natural, geographical, and cultural elements. Men usually wear a knee-length shirt, baggy pants, and a turban. Women usually wear a dress with a large pocket in front, pants, and a shawl to cover head. Women's costumes are richly embroidered by baluchi Suzandozi (the traditional needlework with embedded small mirror pieces that is one of the most beautiful Iranian handicrafts). Gold ornaments and jewelry, especially rings, are part of their traditions.

The important part of Baluch people's diet is meat. Baluch men and women in a family usually have meals separately. Baluch people's hospitality and generosity to guests is as well-known as their camel racing. They share a common identity with Baluch people of Pakistan and Afghanistan. One of their nice traditions is called Bjar. It is the financial or material support of families and relatives to the young men who wish to marry. Baluch people celebrate the birth of a child, marriage, circumcision of boys, and religious and social ceremonies with folk music, traditional dance and food.

Chauk is one of their traditional games played with wood.

## Turkmans

They primarily live in the provinces of Golestan and North Khorasan. They speak one of the dialects of Turkic language that is spoken in the Republic of Turkmenistan. They are mostly Muslims.

Wool hats are the main feature of men's clothes.

In the family tree of Turkmans there are names such as Tatar and Turk. Wedding ceremony is of great importance among Turkmans. It is usually held outdoors, men and women separated. As the guests usually come from other villages, the ceremony usually lasts for two or three days. Traditional musical instruments such as tar and dotar are played. A kind of soup named Shurva is served. The bride is taken to the groom's house in Kajaveh over two camels or mules. Meanwhile, the fastest horseman who gets first to the groom's house while announcing the bride's coming

will get the prize from the bride's parents. Horse racing and wrestling are the two contests played in Weddings, religious festivities, and other happy ceremonies. As the horse has a main role in Turkmans' lives, they start learning horse riding at the age of 5.

There are also numerous minor groups, and various tribal Turkic groups such as Qashqai and Shahsavani. Qashqai territory extends from the south part of Isfahan province to Fars, Khuzestan, and to the Persian Gulf coast. They speak Qashqai, a language from Turkic language family. Many of them are still nomads, but some of them have become sedentary. The Qashqai nomads travel from pastures in the north of Shiraz at the beginning of cold weather to the pastures near the Persian Gulf in the southwest of Fars. The nomadic tribes of Iran include different groups of ethnicity such as Turkmans, Turks, Kurds, Lurs, Arabs, and the Baluch.

Other minority groups include Talysh people (in Gilan and Azerbaijan), and Tat people (near Alborz mountains and in the south of Qazvin province). There are also religious minorities in Iran including Assyrians (mostly in Tehran and Urmia), Jews, Mandaeans, Armenians (Christian), Georgians, and Circassians.





*Iran the Most fascinating and surprising land I've ever visited.*

*Rick Steves' Travel Journal*







Fin Garden



Dolatabad Garden



Chehel Sotoun

# PERSIAN GARDENS

## The Paradise on Earth

Persian garden truly resembles the paradise on Earth. The general pattern of Persian gardens (Iranian gardens) has a rectangular form consisting four quarters abundant in trees and flowers, streams and pathways, ponds and fountains, usually a central pavilion, and the walls that surround the garden. The Persian gardens are so remarkable that nine gardens out of a wide variety are inscribed on UNESCO World Heritage List. The gardens located at different climatic parts of Iran have their unique features but are still similar in overall structure.

According to Persian literature, the word “garden” means “paradise” which is derived from the word “paridaiza”. Paridaiza means a garden surrounded by walls. This walled garden makes a harmony between nature and human’s art of creation. The evergreen trees harness the sharp sunlight, the water flow makes the environment cool, and the pavilion blocks the sunlight while providing picturesque view from the terrace.

Persian garden holds roots in the 6th BC when Cyrus the great who ruled over a vast territory, determined the plan of the ancient garden of Pasargadae and ordered it to be constructed at Pasargadae (close to Shiraz province). In fact, the unique plan of Persian garden, its elaborate architecture, and the presence of natural elements originated from Cyrus’ notions. The purpose of Persian garden was to provide physical and spiritual relaxation. So, it is true to say that it was during the Achaemenid Empire that the idea of an earthly paradise came into reality.

Later, the Sassanid created Persian Gardens inspired by Zoroastrianism. According to their religious belief, the four quarters of the garden resembled four seasons of the year, and the importance of water running through the garden was more emphasized. The oldest documented illustration of Persian garden also dates back to Sassanid era. In the bas-relief of Taq Bostan, the hunt-garden of Khosrow Parviz (the king of Sassanid dynasty), is the oldest engraved work that depicts the geometry of the Persian garden.

In the Islamic period, the aesthetic aspect of the gardens was more enhanced. According to the Islamic notion, Persian garden resembled heaven described in Quran. Being inspired by the image of heaven, Iranians put more emphasis on four heavenly streams running through the garden.

The uniqueness of Persian Garden is not limited to its geometry, design, and architecture. Symbolism has a profound role in adding value to Persian garden. In the

Persian garden, natural elements are elaborately combined with manmade components to make an ideal reflection of symbolic and physical beliefs. There are different opinions toward the meaning of each element in Persian garden; however, the majorities declare that the garden materializes the concept of an earthly paradise. Moreover, four quarters called Chahr Bagh (four gardens) are the symbol of the universe whose architect is God, the water is the symbol of men’s and women’s purification, and the evergreen trees especially cypresses are the symbol of immortality. Beyond their symbolism, their usefulness is also important. For instance, the irrigation system makes a cool environment in the heart of hot deserts of Iran, or the fruitful trees such as peach and apricot reveal the pattern of productivity.

Since Iranians appreciate art in different forms, the idea of Persian garden has influenced the design, decoration, and description of other arts such as Persian carpet, pottery, calligraphy, music, and poetry. Among all, Persian carpet is one of the best illustrations of Persian garden. Many carpet designs are inspired by Persian garden and it is better to say that Persian carpet is a flat Persian garden with many trees, flowers, and birds.

Though a very long time has passed from the construction of Persian garden of Pasargadae in 6th BC, the Persian garden has kept its architectural and geometrical principles during history. It has also found the way to other countries especially Agra in India and Andalusia in Spain. Moreover, Pasargadae Garden at Pasargadae, Chehel Sotoun, Fin Garden, Eram Garden, Shazdeh Garden, Dolatabad Garden, Abbasabad Garden, Akbarieh Garden, and Pahlevanpour Garden are the Persian gardens inscribed on UNESCO World Heritage list, and they attract tours to Iran either by their survived plans or their scenic sceneries.



# ERAM GARDEN

Among the Most Beautiful Persian Gardens

Eram garden located in Shiraz is among the most beautiful Persian gardens of Iran. It is such a unique and gorgeous garden that is inscribed on UNESCO World Heritage list. In the holy book of Quran, Eram is described as the paradise prepared for the blessed ones. It has a great atmosphere surrounded by tall cypress trees, fragrant flowers, and aromatic sour orange trees. Moreover, the sound of birds singing in the green space of the garden brings peace and quiet to the tourists, and it is quite pleasurable to have a stroll across the garden. In spring, Eram garden catches eyes with its colorful blooms and blossoms, and it is a great tourist destination that attracts those who travel to Iran.

The history of Eram garden structured as a Persian garden dates back to Seljuq dynasty, while the old building within the garden belongs to Qajar dynasty. The building has an elaborate architecture decorated with tiles that are designed by poems of great poets such as Hafez and Saadi. It has a view of the blue pool that enhances the picturesque scene of Eram garden and makes the environment cool during hot days of summer. Owing to its variety of plants, Eram garden is popular as the botanical garden supported and managed by Shiraz University and it is open to the public to enjoy its many beauties.





# IRAN

## UNESCO

world heritage sites

Iran is one of the world's greatest untapped tourist destinations having 21 cultural and 1 natural UNESCO World Heritage sites and many other fascinating cultural and natural attractions.

# YAZD

## the City of Wind Catchers

The five thousand year old city of Yazd located in the center of Iran is one of the greatest adobe cities of the world. It is one of the driest cities of Iran with the minimum amount of rain or snow falling; however, the dry climate of Yazd has been a blessing for it to get flourished in art and architecture. Recently, Yazd has been inscribed on UNESCO World Heritage list as a priceless adobe city embracing many pre-Islamic and Islamic attractions. Yazd, the city of wind catchers is also well-known as the jewel of desert. It is a "do not miss destination" for tourists who travel to Iran.

Literally, Yazd means holy and sacred. The city of Yazd has taken its name from Sassanid ruler "Yazdgerd I". During Sassanid dynasty, Zoroastrianism was the dominant creed of Yazd people. Today, there are some Zoroastrian attractions in Yazd such as Zoroastrian fire temple (Atashkadeh) that is believed to have a fire burning since 470 AD, and towers of silence (Zoroastrian's Dakhmeh). Towers of silence are located out of the city of Yazd and they are not in use today; however, once these two circular structures on the top of two adjacent hills were places to leave the dead bodies for scavenger birds to pick at.

Yazd is located between the largest deserts of Iran: Dasht-e-Kavir and Dasht-e-Lut. Therefore, its location in the arid area has protected it against many attacks devastating other cities of Iran in the past. Moreover, people of Yazd adapted themselves to the climatic condition of Yazd and applied their knowledge for making it a good place to live rather than abandoning the city. They made their homes out of adobe clay which reflected the sunlight and received less sun heat. The architecturally unique city of Yazd has maintained its old context and today it is really pleasant to stroll through the labyrinth-like alleys of Yazd and to get lost in the narrow lines full of stories of ancient times.

To survive the hot summer days, Yazd architects designed wind catchers (wind towers) called Badgir in Persian. The wind catchers act like natural ventilators. They are in shape of high structures designed to cool

the inner environment of the houses by receiving the wind, cooling it, and directing the stream of cool wind into the inner spaces. Usually, there are big or small ponds below the wind catchers to make the ventilation more effective. Yazd tallest wind catcher is located in Dowlatabad Garden; a fantastic Persian garden inscribed on UNESCO World Heritage List.

Qanat is also another Persian innovation elaborately applied in Yazd. To provide water, Yazd people took advantage of Qanat technique and Yazd Qanat makers were the most skillful in Iran.

After the advent of Islam in Iran in 651 AD, the majority of Yazd people gradually converted to Islam. Therefore, Yazd enjoys a variety of Islamic architectural structures and elements as well.

Amir Chakhmaq complex is a prominent architectural structure in Yazd and it was built in the 15th century by Jalal al Din Amir Chakhmaq who was the ruler of Yazd in the Timurid era. It has a three storey façade and it is famous for the symmetrical arched alcoves. It is a mosque located on the square called Amir Chakhmaq square and gets glorious at nights when it is lit up with orange lighting. Since Yazd is a family centered city, it enjoys families' gathering in different parts of the city such as Amir Chakhmaq complex.

Jameh Mosque of Yazd (Masjed Jameh) is also famous for its outstanding architecture. It has the highest minarets in Iran and the entrance of the mosque is decorated with dazzling ceramic tiles. The history of Jameh Mosque dates back to 12th century. The sanctuary chamber within the mosque is called Shabestan and it is decorated with faience mosaics. Moreover, the perfect patterns of mosaic tiles and brick work make an awesome beauty that is very attractive for the tourists. The reputation of Yazd is also for its magnificent handicrafts especially textiles. Once in 13th century, Marco Polo traveled to Iran and described Yazd as a city with a fine silk weaving industry. Today, Yazd is one of Iran's textile industry centers. Kilim, small carpets, rugs, ironworks, pottery, and ceramics are among the great handicrafts of Yazd. Tourists usually buy handicrafts and Yazdi delicious sweets such as Baqlava and Qotab as Yazd souvenirs.

Yazd has kind and approachable people as well. It is interesting to know that Yazd people speak with Yazdi accent which is different from the main accent of Iranian people. Moreover, they know the value of their cultural treasure and play an important role in maintaining their cultural heritage.





## Golestan palace

Golestan palace located in the heart of Tehran is recorded as one of the UNESCO world heritage sites. It displays the history of Tehran rooted in Qajar dynasty.



## Meidan Emam

Meidan Emam in Isfahan was built at the beginning of the 17th century. It is surrounded on all sides by Imam Mosque, Sheikh Lotfollah mosque, Ali Qapu and many other shops that sell handicrafts.



## Shushtar historical hydraulic system

Shushtar historical hydraulic system is an amazing site to see. It is the masterpiece of creative genius and one could trace it back to Darius the Great in the 5th century B.C. Strolling around this UNESCO world heritage site in the evening and hearing the waterfalls is just a surprise.



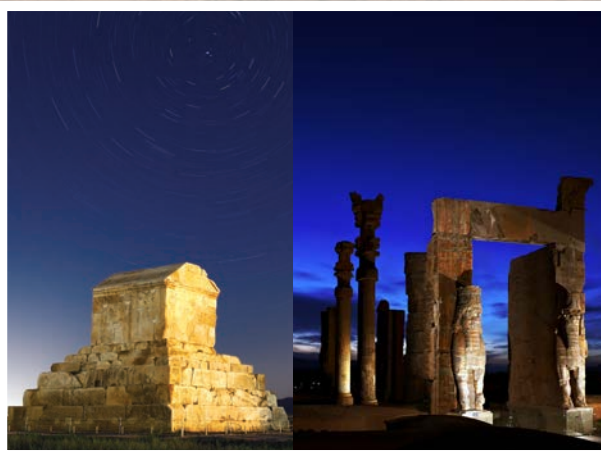
## Tchogha Zanbil

Tchogha Zanbil is a wonderful and amazing UNESCO world heritage site. It is the ruins of the holy city of the kingdom of Elam found in 1250 B.C. Tchogha Zanbil ziggurat is built in the middle of the desert and visiting it especially in the evening when the sunset is magnificent is of great value.



## Masjed-e-Jame

Masjed-e-Jame of Isfahan is another world heritage site located in Isfahan. It has a stunning architecture adapting the four-courtyard layout of Sassanid palaces. It presents Islamic art in a magnificent way.



## Pasargadae & Persepolis

In Fars province, there are two UNESCO world heritage sites of Pasargadae" the first dynastic capital of the Achaemenid Empire founded by Cyrus the Great" and Persepolis" founded by Darius-the king of kings- in 518 B.C". To explore the magnificence of Persian Empire, one must explore these two sites.



## The Armenian Monastic Ensembles of Iran

The Armenian Monastic Ensembles of Iran (UNESCO world heritage site) located in the north-west of Iran consists of the monastic ensembles: St. Thaddeus (Qara Kelisa) St. Stepanos, and the chapel of Dzordzor. These historical holy sites for Christians with great architecture, surrounded by spectacular landscape are really great.



## Tabriz Historic Bazaar

Tabriz Historic Bazaar Complex is the other world heritage site in East Azerbaijan province. The magnificent architecture of Tabriz bazaar with stunning vaulted roofs plus its ancient history going back to the 12th century made this structure so valuable in history and culture.





## Sheikh Safi al-din Khānegāh

Sheikh Safi al-din Khānegāh and Shrine Ensemble in Ardabil is a breathtaking monument inscribed on UNESCO world heritage list. Sheikh Safi was the ancestor of Shah Ismail I, the founder of Iran's Safavid dynasty (1501-1722). After his death, his mausoleum became the most valuable and sacred place for his descendants, especially during the Safavid dynasty.



## Soltaniyeh

Soltaniyeh Dome is the gemstone of Zanjan. The historical city of Soltaniyeh was the capital of Mongolian Il-khan dynasty that holds the largest brick dome in the world. Dome of Soltaniyeh, a world heritage site is a 50m tall double-shell dome sitting on an octagon-shaped base. This beautiful monument has an exquisite architecture inside and outside.



## Persian Qanat

Persian Qanat is a hydraulic water system. Iranians have been building Qanat for six thousand years to provide water for people living in deserts. Eleven Qantas in different provinces of Iran such as Kerman, Khorasan Razavi, Yazd, Arak, and Isfahan are inscribed on UNESCO world heritage list.



## Persian garden

Persian garden truly resembles the paradise on Earth. The general pattern of Persian gardens has a rectangular form consisting of four quarters abundant in trees and flowers, ponds and fountains, and the walls that surround the garden. The Persian gardens such as Eram Garden or Shazdeh Garden are among the nine gardens inscribed on UNESCO World Heritage List.



## Bisotun

The Bisotun inscription is the biggest inscription in the world and the very first Persian written text that contributed a lot to understanding the history of the time. Bisotun is a very valuable document not only for Iran but also for the world because it is the only official document that shows sovereignty and re-establishment of the greatest empire in the world by Darius I.



## Takht-e Soleyman

Takht-e Soleyman is another wonderful UNESCO world heritage site recommended to those who travel to Iran. The name means Throne of Solomon in West Azerbaijan province. It is a historic complex consisting of palaces, fire temples, the Prison of Solomon, and a mysterious lake. The structure belongs to the first millennium BC and it was used by Sassanid and Ilkhanid kings.



## Susa

The ancient city of Susa is also inscribed on UNESCO world heritage list. It covers about 350 hectares, constitutes one of the world's largest archaeological sites, and is located in the south-west of Iran. This city belongs to the different historical periods especially the Elamite, Persian and Parthian periods.



## The Cultural Landscape of Meymand

The Cultural Landscape of Meymand inscribed on UNESCO world heritage list is a cave village located in the south-eastern Iranian province of Kerman. Meymand village has been continuously inhabited for 2,000 to 3,000 years making it one of Iran's four oldest surviving villages.





## Shahr-i Sokhta

Shahr-i Sokhta, meaning burnt city is one of Iran's world heritage sites in Sistan & Baluchestan province of Iran. The city was found around 3200 BCE and was abandoned in 1800 BCE. Shahr-i Sokhta was a city with high technology. Archeologists have found traces of brain surgery, an artificial eyeball, dice and caraway seeds there.



## Bam and its Cultural Landscape

Another UNESCO world heritage site in Iran is Bam and its Cultural Landscape. Bam is situated in a desert environment in Kerman province. The origins of Bam date back to the Achaemenid period; then it has a history of 2500 years. Arg-e Bam is also a great adobe building representing a fortified medieval town considered as one of the great cultural heritages of Iran.



## Lut Desert

Lut Desert or Dasht-e Lut, a salt desert in Kerman and Sistan and Baluchestan province on east and south east of Iran, is the world's 26th largest desert. The mysterious beauty and unique characteristics of Lut make this desert a valuable legacy for the entire world.



## Gonbade Qabus

Three Kilometers away from the Gorgan city, there is a 53 meters-high brick-tower called Gonbade Qabus that is inscribed on UNESCO world heritage list. It is a magnificent masterpiece of Islamic architecture because of its aesthetic geometry.





# Delicious Nightlife in Iran

When it comes to nightlife, many people think of bars, cabarets, and casinos! If they are questioned what you think of nightlife in a religious Islamic country like Iran, they may think you are pulling their legs! They barely think Iran as any other country enjoys great lively nights full of bright flickering lights, of course in harmony with its culture. Nightlife in Iran is inextricably intertwined with delectable unique Iranian food and family life. Let's see what happens in some main cities at night!

## Tehran

Tehran as the capital of Iran enjoys great lively enjoyable nights contrary to the heavy traffic during the day. There are numerous places to visit and enjoy at night in Tehran as the city of museums, palaces, and parks. In some parks, different nightly arcades are held introducing handicrafts and traditional or home-made foods. Many concerts and plays are performed in concert or theater halls such as Vahdat Hall, Roudaki Hall, or Milad Tower at night.

The movies also show late-night movies in summer and in Ramadan. Many shopping centers in summer or on holidays are open until late night too. It is a good opportunity for those who prefer shopping at night.

Many restaurants and coffee shops also serve food and other relevant services such as hubble-bubble and live music until late at night. Moreover, there are some Tehran city tours delivered at night to make people familiar with both traditional texture and modern parts of the city. As the streets are less crowded at nights, it gives people a best view of the city architecture.

Bam e Tehran (literally the roof of Tehran), as one of the passages to Tochal peak, is the best place for a full magnificent view of the city at night. It is open 24/7. The mild slope walking road is suitable for different ages. There are food and fast food stands along the road too. The award winning Tabiat (Nature) Bridge is also a good

multipurpose place: It's all possible to get some fresh air, watch modern architecture, and have dinner at the international wooden road food court near the bridge while meeting friendly locals. 30-Tir Street, a historical street with many museums and historical buildings such as National Museum, is another nice suggestion.

There are a lot of portable stations for homemade or traditional street foods, drinks, ice cream, and fast food on both sides of the street. As it is closed on cars at nights, you can feel more safety and tranquility. Darband, just above Tajrish Square, is a place where you can experience

the Tehran nights in a different way. In fact, it's a must-see! You can taste traditional Iranian food and drinks in the open air restaurants after taking a walk along the roaring river, or the snacks the vendors offer. Honarmandan (Artists) Park is another choice, especially for those who love art or prefer vegetarian diet. There are art galleries and a vegetarian restaurant and café there. Azadi Square is another example for nightlife in Tehran! As there are the intercity bus terminal and the taxi station there, the travelers who are waiting for their bus or taxi can experience late-night snacks and food while the vendors are selling their products beside the street.



# Mashhad

Mashhad, the second most populated city of Iran, embraces the Holy Shrine. It is a vibrant metropolitan city with lively crowded nights. As the streets leading to the shrine are crammed with five-star and luxury hotels, budget hotels, hotel apartments, and hostels all full of travelers and pilgrims, and the shrine welcomes the pilgrims 24/7, the vendors sell different products from delicacies to the clothes at late night. The streets are so lively that it barely comes to mind that it's past midnight! Even many shops near the holy shrine remain open at that time to hospitalize the guests of Imam Reza (eighth Shiite Imam) and offer them a wide variety of products and services such as souvenirs. In fact, the boundaries between day and night in Mashhad are less obvious and nightlife includes different kinds of religious, business, and recreational activities. Mashhad is also famous for its countryside restaurants. There are many picturesque villages with pleasant weather, cool at night, such as Shandiz and Torqabeh. They serve a broad variety of scrumptious traditional food until late at night. They are well-known for some Iranian popular kebabs such as Shishlik, Barg, Bakhtiari, other kinds of traditional food like Dizi, as well as tea and hubble-bubble. There are also plenty of fast food restaurants and souvenir shops. Shariati Square in Mashhad is also another place where all restaurants, cafes, coffee shops, greasy spoons, fast food restaurants and pizzerias are open late at night. Many recreational and sport centers such as the movies, parks, pools and water parks, Water Waves Land as the largest water park in the Middle East for example, are open till morning in Ramadan too.



# Isfahan

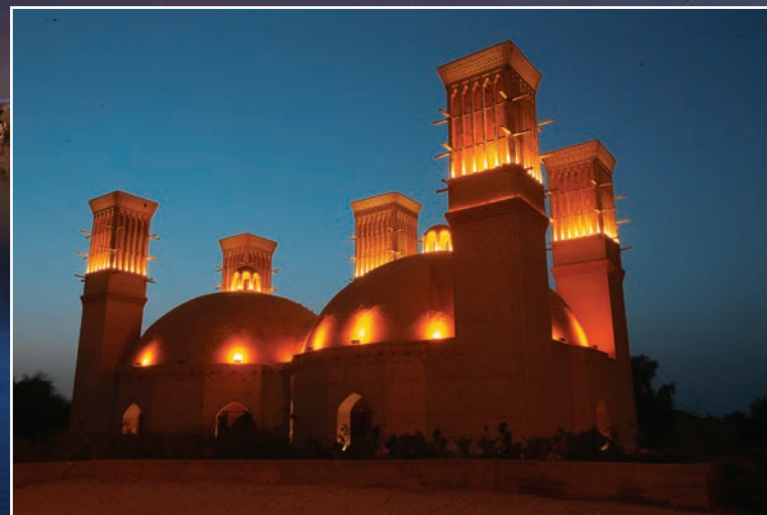
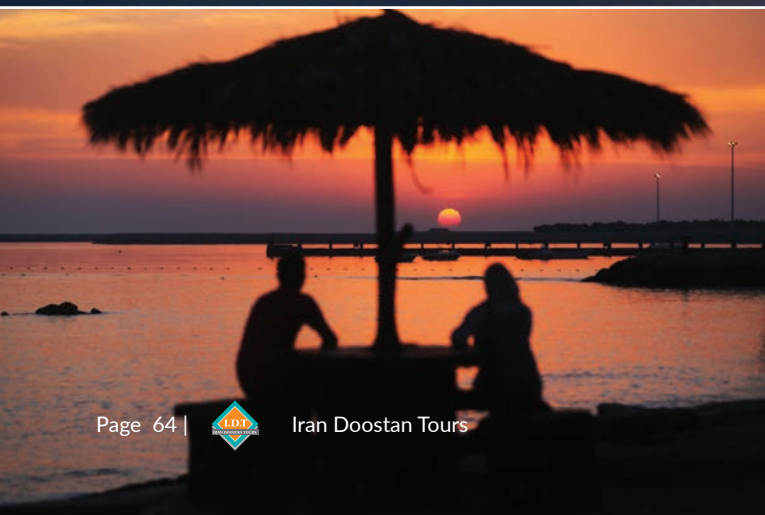
Isfahan is the masterpiece of Islamic architecture and art. You can see a great deal of mosques, caravanserais, bridges, madrasas, churches, handicrafts, etc. in Isfahan. But the part of the city where you can experience the liveliest nights is around Zayandeh-Rud River and the bridges over it. Zayandeh-Rud River adds more beauty and exhilaration to the city atmosphere. At night, people gather on the bridges and in the riverside parks. Some young men sing traditional music under Si-o-Se Pol (the bridge with 33 arches); a live solo concert under the sky! Some families have a picnic to have dinner together. Some drink tea enjoying the cool weather of night beside the river. Soffe Park on the mountain is recommended too. You can have a wonderful view of the city at sunset or sunrise.





# Kish

Kish as a free zone enjoys more various night events. After sunset, there are live music and different festivals in the restaurants. Dolphin Park is one of the places you can enjoy your time at night. The dolphin show in Dolphin Park is interesting. This park includes a bird garden containing more than 57 species of birds, a large aquarium exhibiting sea animals such as dolphins, sea lions, and white whales, a circus show and dolphin show. The dolphins in Dolphinarium play an amusing circus-like show that is worth watching especially with family. Some ships as moving restaurants welcome the guests by performing live music and serving dinner on the Persian Gulf waters. Before that, you can also enjoy bowling near the pier. Moreover, you can enjoy watching the amazing coastal landscape at night, biking or skating. There are sometimes concerts or live fun programs performed by famous or skillful artists in prominent hotels from midnight to dawn as well.



# Rasht

Rasht, known as the city of raining, designated as UNESCO creative city of gastronomy. So, it could be a perfect choice for people who have good appetite! There are many installs and carts by the road offering kebab to kebab lovers. Every night, after shops are closed they serve the customers until late night. On some of these carts you can find hot delicious tea of Gilan farms, sometimes mixed with sour cherry that makes a perfect drink after having kebab. Rasht nightlife mostly includes family gatherings in different restaurants or around food kiosks. Among cities of Iran, Rasht is known as the city of night walking. It is famous as a city without sleeping! You can add overnight stay at the shore of Caspian Sea too.



*Contrary to what many people in foreign countries think, remember that all activities abovementioned happen more lively and joyfully at nights in Ramadan. Moreover, parks at night are the best places during summer to meet local families who have gathered together for a picnic or a family dinner in fresh air under the sky.*



*“The journey not the arrival matters.”*

*T.S. Eliot*





# IRANIAN Festivals





# Iran's Festivals

## and Ceremonies as Tourist Attractions

*Festivals, rituals, events, and traditions are among the variety of interesting factors that make distinction. Distinction is a critical factor that motivates tourists to visit different countries of the world. Iran, as a historical country has variety of ancient traditions. To get familiar with Iranian culture, its most famous festivals and ceremonies are introduced and explained.*



## Nowruz

Nowruz known as the Persian New Year is one of the greatest Iranian festivals celebrated worldwide by Iranians and some other ethno-linguistic groups as the beginning of the New Year. It is a traditional festival having roots in thousand years ago even before the development of the Persian Empire in 5th BC. Persian New Year begins at the end of freezing days of winter when the fresh mild days of spring are celebrated for 13 days usually beginning on 21st of March that is the first day of spring in the Iranian calendar. Since Nowruz begins at the exact moment of the vernal equinox, the moment of celebrating the New Year differs from one year to another. The true moment of Nowruz is calculated according to Jalali calendar.

Though Nowruz is deeply rooted in Zoroastrian creed, it goes beyond religious, cultural, and national boundaries and it is celebrated as a traditional festival by all Iranians and many others living in other countries such as Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan,

Afghanistan, and Kyrgyzstan. It is also inscribed on UNESCO list of Intangible Cultural Heritage of humanity in 2010. Consequently, March 21 was recognized by the UN General Assembly as the International Day of Nowruz.

At the beginning of Nowruz, a fictional character in Persian folklore comes to the streets. He is called Haji Firuz whose face is covered in soot and wears a red hat and bright red clothes. He plays tambourine, sings, dances, and takes money from people who are happy with his singing.

Setting "Sofreh Haft Seen" is an interesting custom of Nowruz. Sofreh or tabletop includes Seven (Haft) symbolic edible herbs and fruits all starting with the letter "Seen" in Persian Alphabet (pronounced as letter S in English), an ornamented mirror, Holy book, and a Divan of Hafez. Each of the fruits or herbs stands for a meaningful concept. For instance, Seeb( Apple) stands for health, Sumac stands for warmth of life, or Sabzeh (sprouted wheat grass) stands for a sign of life renewal. During 13 days of Eid Nowruz (New Year festival), relatives and friends meet each other to say " Eid Mubarak", celebrate the new year together, eat delicious sweets dedicated to Nowruz, and wish each other a fortunate and prosperous year. Moreover, the elderly usually give Eidi(gifts or goodwill money) to their children, grandchildren, or the relatives' kids. The



last day of Nowruz (the 13th day) is called Sizdahbedar. It is also known as the day of nature. On the last day of Nowruz, Iranian families spend time picnicking outdoors by gathering in parks, gardens, and other green places. According to a traditional belief, it is inauspicious to stay home on the 13th day of Nowruz; however, it is an opportunity to spend time happily on the last day of Nowruz Holiday and also to get enough energy for the coming workdays.





# Mehregan

The autumn starts with the month of Mehr (the seventh month of the year) in Iran and its 16th day called “Mehregan” is the celebration of light, friendship, kindness, and love in Avestan calendar. Mehr is the symbol of the sun in Persian culture and the sun is said to be the eye of Mitra, the goddess of light. It is also the Thanksgiving Day for the Iranian farmers. In ancient times, Mehregan was the harvest day and some of the crops were sent to the king as a gift. On this day, people go visiting their loved ones specially the ones that have been missed for a longtime in order to enjoy the beauty of this vibrant-colored season together. The ceremony begins with saying a prayer in front of a mirror. Hugs and kisses are exchanged after a handful of noghl (sugar plum) are thrown over each other’s heads. Mehregan is marked by love, light, friendship, and kindness.

# Yalda

Shab-e-Yalda (Yalda Night) also known as Shab-e Chelleh is one of the most ancient Persian festivals annually celebrated on December 21 by Iranians all around the world. It is the last night of autumn and the longest night of the year. Yalda means birth and it refers to the birth of Mitra; the mythological goddess of light. Since days get longer and nights get shorter in winter, Iranians celebrate the last night of autumn as the renewal of the sun and the victory of light over darkness. On Shab-e-Yalda, people gather in groups of friends or relatives usually at the home of grandparents or the elderly to pass the longest night of the year happily by eating nuts and fruits, reading Hafiz poems, making good wishes, and talking and laughing all together. Eating is the delicious part of Yalda Night. Iranians eat nuts, watermelons, and pomegranates on this special night. Some believe that watermelon symbolizes the sun by its spherical shape while others believe that eating watermelon keeps one safe from being hurt by winter diseases. Pomegranate is also a symbol of birth and its bright red seeds symbolize the glow of life. Reading poems from Divan-e-Hafiz is another interesting tradition of Yalda Night. Each of the members of a family or a group of friends makes a wish and randomly opens the book; then the eldest member of the family or friends reads the randomly selected poem loudly. Since the poem is believed to be the interpretation of the wish and the way it would come true, it is fun to interpret the poem and guess the wishes others make. In this way, the last and the longest night of autumn passes happily and the first great day of winter begins.





# Tasua and Ashura

Tasua and Ashura are respectively the 9th and 10th days of Muharram (the first month of the Islamic calendar) and Shia Muslims commemorate the battle of Karbala that occurred in 680 AD and the Muslims' Prophet's grandson "Hossein" and his 72 relatives and supporters were killed. Tasua and Ashura are somehow symbols of standing up for justice. Tasua and Ashura are examples of cultural-religious ceremonies among Shia-Muslims. Annually, they are held in the form of mass movement in Iran. Though Tasua and Ashura are religious ceremonies for Iranians, they fascinate many tourists by representing different traditions varying from one city to the other one. In fact, Tasua and Ashura ceremonies reflect the culture and religion of Shia Muslims of Iran. People usually dress in black and rally in the streets; some hold huge metal pieces decorated with flags and lead the population, some beat their drums, some hit their backs with chains, and others accompany the mourning ones.

Many families cook food that is called "Nazri". Nazri is distributed among all people whether rich or poor and the lucky tourists can participate in making food or distributing it and finally eating the delicious Nazri food.

In Tehran, Imam Mosque in the grand bazaar is one of the best places to observe the event; however, it is really crowded. In Yazd, Nakhil-Gardani is one of the great cultural-religious traditions. The Nakhil (meaning palm-tree) is a huge structure weighing several tons in the shape of a very large leaf or the cypress tree. Hundreds of male mourners in Amir Chakhmaq Square carry the Nakhil which symbolizes the coffin of Imam Hossein and his martyr companions on their shoulders. The city of Taft close to Yazd is proud of having the largest Nakhil of Yazd province. People of Lorestan also hold ceremonies such as performing tragic music with Chamari (a traditional musical instrument) during the first decade of Muharram.



## Chaharshanbeh Suri

Chaharshanbeh Suri known as the Persian Festival of Fire is also an Iranian festival celebrated on the eve of the last Wednesday before Nowruz. The origin of the festival dates back to the early Zoroastrian era and it is celebrated with firework displays and the jumping over fires. People believe that the red color of fire symbolizes health. In the evening of Chaharshanbeh Suri, people make bonfires and jump over the fire while symbolically ask the fire to take sickness away and bring about health.





# IRAN

## Luxury tour

Explore the glory of spectacular thousands year kingdom on our luxury tour to ancient civilization of Iran. Our tours are for a minimum of 2, up to a maximum of 10 people.

Experience a unique style of hospitality among a multicultural welcoming and friendly people with a long history of mingling culture, art, and science.

Start the luxury journey by visiting the historical palaces in Tehran\_ the modern capital of ancient Iran\_ known as the city of palaces, museums, parks and restaurants. Visiting Jewelry Museum encompassing the most invaluable jewels as the national treasury, Archeological Museum embracing signs of ancient human evolution and civilization, and Golestan Palace representing magnificence of different kinds of Iranian art such as mosaic or mirror work are just part of our luxury tour. After paying a visit to the luxury shopping mall, and the theater or concert hall in the evening, the roof top restaurant in Milad Tower- the sixth tallest tower in the world- will host us with its great delectable dinner.

Shiraz, Isfahan, Yazd, and Kashan are other must-see cities where we can visit the grandeur of the cradle of ancient civilization, and the masterpieces of art and architecture in their UNESCO World Heritage Sites and other historical sites. The cities of the great mosques, churches, citadels, splendid palaces, grand bazaars, and amazing structures of prosperous Persian gardens in the heart of dry lands are all included in our luxury tour. A professional tour guide in a VIP vehicle will accompany you to Persepolis- the royal Achaemenid capital-, Naghsh-e-Rostam Necropolis, and tomb of Cyrus the Great as the remains of the glory of the most powerful and the greatest kingdom in ancient times. We

will also stop by the tombs of great Persian poets, the pioneers of rich Iranian literature. Fire temples and the Zoroastrianism structures will show us a valuable part of Iran's distinctive culture as well. In fact, the ancient Persian culture reflected in its magnificent historic sites and hospitality of its friendly people as well as its spectacular scenery is the most fascinating part of Iran to visit.

Playing golf, fishing, or skiing are among hobbies we do during our luxury tour.

During the trip, we will stay in five-star hotels, where the highest level of services is offered by the professionals in hospitality. We will have lavish dinners in the beautiful gardens. We will also taste scrumptious traditional Iranian food in luxury restaurants while enjoying Persian caviar.

Having experienced an unforgettable time in Iran, one of the safest countries in the Middle East, you will serve as an apostle of friendly Iran by indirectly and unconsciously advertising and you will make others know the real face of this ancient hospitable country on returning home.

### Notes:

- A photographer and film maker will accompany you if requested.
- The dancers with traditional clothes will welcome you by performing traditional dances.
- You can travel by a VIP car, minibus, or bus provided with free WIFI on the road.
- You will be presented valuable souvenirs at the end of the trip.



The Iranian royal throne made in 1967 kept and exhibited in the National Jewelry Museum



## Day 01

### Tehran

Arrival in Tehran airport and after greetings you will be transferred to the hotel.

O/N in Tehran.

## Day 02

### Tehran

Visit Niavaran Palace and have coffee there. Heading to Palladium luxury shopping mall, in the evening we will go to one of the traditional theater or music concert halls. Have dinner in Milad Tower roof top restaurant and overnight stay in Deluxe suite in 5star hotel.

O/N in Tehran.

## Day 03

### Tehran

We can play golf or go fishing at Enghelab Sport Complex (in summer) or visit Dizin Ski Resort (in winter) for skiing in Alborz Mountains. Have dinner at Divan Luxury Restaurant while trying Persian caviar.

O/N in Tehran.

## Day 04

### Tehran - shiraz

A full day city tour in Tehran including Archeological Museum, Golestan Palace (UNESCO World Heritage Site) and Jewelry Museum. In the afternoon, Have a flight to Shiraz with business class, then have dinner at luxury Haftkhan restaurant.

O/N in Shiraz.

## Day 05

### Shiraz

A full day city tour in Shiraz visiting Nasir-ol Molk Mosque, Narenjestan or Eram Garden (UNESCO World Heritage Site/ One of Nine Persian Gardens), Karim Khan Citadel, Vakil Bazaar and Mosque, and Shah Cheragh from outside. Have dinner in a garden in the countryside with live Persian music performance.

O/N in Shiraz.

## Day 06

### Shiraz - Persepolis - Shiraz

In the morning, drive to Achaemenid capital Persepolis and Naghsh-e Rostam Necropolis (UNESCO World Heritage sites), drive back to Shiraz to visit Quran Gate, Tombs of Saadi or Hafez (the two great Persian poets).

O/N in Shiraz.

## Day 07

### Shiraz - Yazd

Driving to Yazd, en route visit Pasargadae and the Tomb of Cyrus the Great (UNESCO World Heritage Sites).

Then continue to Yazd to visit Abarqu Old Cypress, traditional Takiyeh Amir Chahmaq arcade building, and Fahadan Area.

O/N in Yazd.

## Day 08

### Yazd

A half day city tour in Yazd visiting Zoroastrian Towers of Silence, fire temple, Jame' Mosque, Dowlatabad Garden and Wind Tower (UNESCO World Heritage Site/ One of Nine Persian Gardens). At night, enjoy a ceremony of traditional live music and lavish dinner.

O/N in Yazd.

## Day 09

### Yazd - Isfahan

Drive to Isfahan, en route we will visit Nain Jameh Mosque and Pirnia traditional house. In the evening, we will visit Si-o-se-pol and Khajoo bridges, we will have dinner at Khan Gostar luxury restaurant in city center shopping mall.

O/N in Isfahan.

## Day 10

### Isfahan

A full day city tour in Isfahan. Visit Armenian Christian Vank Church, Chehel Sotun Palace (UNESCO World Heritage Site/One of Nine Persian Gardens), Imam Square encompassing Imam and Sheikh Lotfollah Mosques, and Ali Qapu Palace (UNESCO World Heritage Sites). At night, we will visit Music Museum where you can play some musical instruments. Have dinner over there.

O/N in Isfahan.

## Day 11

### Isfahan - Matin Abad

In the morning, visit Bazaar and Jame' Mosque (UNESCO World Heritage site). Then drive to Matinabad. En route visiting Abyaneh Village, oldest village in Iran with traditional colored-dress residents. Continue to Matin Abad desert camp for enjoying a night at desert.

O/N in Matin abad Eco -camp.

## Day 12

### Matin abad - Kashan - IKA

After breakfast you can try camel riding and continue to Kashan, visit Fin Garden (UNESCO World Heritage Site/One of Nine Persian Gardens) and traditional Boroujerdiha House in Kashan. Have dinner at Ameriha traditional house. Continue to IKA for departure flight.



# Iranian Local Guest House Tour

This 14-day tour offers a great opportunity to culture lovers by giving a unique experience of Iranian local guest houses. Local house tour is a way to grow your understanding of local communities and can work as a bridge between you and the surrounding community. On this tour, you can see a different side of Iran beyond the historical sites. You can not only enjoy the desert scenery and visit magnificent traditional Iranian architecture and art, but also live in Iranian local guest houses to feel the atmosphere of traditional Persian lifestyle. Our tour includes visits to different sites and attractions including UNESCO World Heritage Yazd; the capital of Islamic art and structure: Isfahan; the city of poem and glory of ancient palaces: Shiraz; the city of one of the most ancient civilizations: Kashan; unique features of Iran's nature such as Kaluts (Yardang) in UNESCO World Heritage Lut Desert and the hottest point on Earth in vast deserts as well as amazing UNESCO World Heritage Persian gardens, and the UNESCO World Heritage thousands year old hand-dug houses amid the rocks in Maymand all in Kerman; traditional cities in the heart of the desert, and Polygons in the desert dried salt lake; Jameh mosques, citadels, palaces, traditional baths, caravanserais, and traditional bazaars. You will also get familiar with Zurkhaneh- the traditional gym for traditional Iranian style of wrestling. During this trip, you will visit the tombs of the greatest Iranian poets of all time. But there is still more things to see and do! The highlight of the tour is visiting local people and spending some time with them. On our visit, we will focus on local society's culture. You will stay in traditional local guest houses built with local materials and decorated with local furniture. Communicating with local people, you will learn much about locals' lifestyle, tradition, culture and history. You can also try traditional Persian foods in both cities and rural areas regarding the fact that every region in Iran has its own special cuisine. You will learn and experience how and where Iranian inhabitants live in local societies. Before coming back to Tehran, you can visit Matinabad Eco-camp- the first and the only eco-camp in Iran and the winner of two national and international prizes on sustainable and responsible tourism and development.



## Day 01

Activity note: Arrival

Arrive in Tehran – Imam Khomeini International Airport (IKIA) – transfer to hotel in Tehran (45 Km – about 1 hr)  
O/N: Hotel in Tehran

## Day 02

Activity note: Khur sightseeing

In the morning, have breakfast in the hotel, check out and start the travel. Long drive to Khur City in the middle of Dasht-e Kavir (Iran central desert) via Semnan (600 km – 7:30 min). En route, stop to have lunch. Arrive in Khur for sightseeing and enjoy free time until dinner.  
O/N: Local house in Khur

## Day 03

Activity note: Visit Mesr Village

In the morning, have local breakfast and drive to the heart of the desert (55 km – 50 min) to reach Mesr Village. It is an oasis with beautiful landscape of palm gardens and farms surrounded by sand dunes. Return Khur for having lunch. After a short rest, drive toward east (40 Km- 40 min) to visit Polygons in the desert of Tabagheh until dusk. Drive back to Khur and have dinner.  
O/N: Local house in Khur

## Day 04

Activity note: Visit Bayazeh and Garmeh villages and drive to Yazd

In the morning, have local breakfast and then leave Khur, drive to Yazd (320 Km – 4 hr). En route, visit Bayazeh Castle, Garmeh Village and have lunch in Kharanagh. Arrive in Yazd and have free time until dinner.  
O/N: Traditional guest house in Yazd

## Day 05

Activity note: Sightseeing in Yazd

In the morning, have breakfast in the hotel and start a full-day sightseeing in Yazd including Zurkhaneh ritual and



Jameh Mosque, then have lunch. After lunch, visit Dowlat Abad Garden, Amir Chakhmagh Complex and Bazaar and enjoy free time until having dinner.  
O/N: Traditional guest house in Yazd

## Day 06

Activity note: Drive to Kerman and Mahan City

In the morning, have breakfast and leave Yazd. Drive to Kerman (375 Km – 4:15 min). En route, stop in Rafsanjan for lunch. Arriving Kerman, visit Ganj Ali Khan Complex. Drive to Mahan City (38 Km – about 30 min) and check in.  
O/N: Iranian traditional hotel in Mahan

## Day 07

Activity note: Visit Kaluts and Shafi Abad Village

In the morning, have breakfast and leave Mahan. Drive to Shahdad (85 km – about 1:15 min) and walk in Lut Desert to see Kaluts (Yardang). Return to Shahdad and short drive to Shafi Abad (20 km – about 20 min) to visit Caravanserai and have lunch in a local house, and then have free time for taking a rest. In the evening, visit palm gardens, enjoy landscape until dusk. After dinner, it is a good time to take a look at beautiful night sky.  
O/N: Local house in Shafi Abad

## Day 08

Activity note: drive to Meymand Village and Shahr-e Babak

In the morning, have local breakfast and drive to Shahr-e Babak (380 km – about 4:40 min). En route, visit Meymand historical village near Shar-e Babak to see hand-dug houses amid the rocks. The village is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Have lunch in Meymand and keep driving to Shahr-e Babak (35 Km – about 30 min) and have free time until dinner.  
O/N: Traditional guest house in Shahr-e Babak.



## Day 09

Activity note: Drive to Shiraz.

In the morning, have local breakfast and leave Shahr-e Babak, drive to Shiraz (360 km – 4:30 min), and have lunch. After a short rest, visit Nasir-ol-Molk Mosque, Narenjestan-e Qavam and Hafez Tomb.  
O/N: Traditional guest house in Shiraz

## Day 10

Activity note: Sightseeing in Shiraz

In the morning, have breakfast and start a full-day city tour in Shiraz including Bazaar and shopping, Vakil Bath, Sara-ye Moshir, Karimkhan Citadel; and then have lunch. After lunch, visit Eram Garden and Tomb of Saadi, and then enjoy free time until dinner.  
O/N: Traditional guest house in Shiraz

## Day 11

Activity note: Visit Persepolis and Pasargadae, drive to Isfahan

In the morning, have breakfast and leave Isfahan, drive to Isfahan (485 km – about 5:45 min). En route, visit Persepolis and Pasargadae, also have lunch. Arrive in Isfahan and visit Si-o Se Pol (bridge) at night.  
O/N: Traditional guest house in Isfahan

## Day 12

Activity note: Isfahan sightseeing and drive to Matin Abad

In the morning, have breakfast; and then visit Naghsh-e Jahan Square, Ali Qapu Palace, Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque, Gaz (Iranian nougat) manufacturing workshop, have lunch and visit Vank Cathedral. Leave Isfahan and drive to Matinabad Village (170 Km – about 2:15 min), then have free time until dinner.  
O/N: Matin Abad Desert Ecocamp

## Day 13

Activity note: Drive to Kashan and Tehran

In the morning, have breakfast and then enjoy walking in the desert. Drive to Kashan (65 km – about 1:15 min) and visit Fin Garden, Bazaar and then have lunch. After lunch, drive to Tehran (245 km – about 3 hr), check in, and have dinner.  
O/N: Hotel in Tehran

## Day 14

Activity note: Departure

In the morning, have breakfast in the hotel; and then visit Golestan Palace, Bazaar and National Garden. Have lunch; and then drive to IKIA (40 Km – about 1 hr) for departure flight.





So Tasty but not too

# IRANIAN FOOD

Iran as a large country embracing different ethnicities with different cultures is so diverse in culinary that every city enjoys a large variety of very delicious and tasty foods unique to that area. Iranians love spices and a combination of different spices such as turmeric, saffron, black pepper, dried lemon, cumin, and so forth to give a savory smell to the foods and make them really delicious. Though Iranians use spices a lot, their foods are usually tasty but not necessarily spicy. Persian foods are a mixture of most nutritious ingredients including meat, rice, vegetables, beans, and spices. Iranians mix all those ingredients in such a balance that they turn into a delicious and nutritious meal as a result. Kebabs, stews, and different kinds of rice (Chelow and Polo) are well known Persian dishes. If you travel to Iran, you have the chance to experience making great Persian foods in major cities of Iran, and in the heart of nature.





## Some of the Iranian foods are introduced as follows:

### Joojeh Kabab and Kabab Koobideh ①

Iranians love kababs and they enjoy the tasty flavor and smell of various kinds of kababs such as Joojeh Kabab and Kabab Koobideh. Joojeh Kabab (Chicken kebab), the Iranian favorite picnic food, is a very delicious food especially when made with fresh chicken marinated in yogurt, saffron, and lemon juice. It is usually made with boneless chicken breast cut into small pieces. Iranians usually grill Joojeh Kabab over hot coals when they go on a picnic and they serve it with grilled tomatoes and onions or with rice.

Kabab Koobideh is also the most famous of all kababs in Iran. It has a very delicious smell while getting grilled. Usually, it is made from ground lamb or beef with chopped onion. It is a tasty dish served in both formal ceremonies and friendly picnics.

### Gheymeh Nesar ②

Gheymeh Nesar of Qazvin is very delicious Persian jeweled rice that has succulent pieces of lamb. The taste of rice mixed with Persian barberries, pistachio, cinnamon, turmeric, rose water, and saffron, and garnished with orange pill slices and almond silvers is very scrumptious. Eating Gheymeh Nesar after visiting historical attractions of Qazvin would be one of the most pleasant moments of your travel to Iran.

### Khoresh-e-Ghormeh Sabzi ③

Khoresh-e-Ghormeh Sabzi (Persian herb stew) is one of the most favorite stews among Iranians. You would rarely find someone who does not love Ghormeh Sabzi. A combination of different aromatic herbs, cooked lamb cubes, beans, and dried lemons make it very delicious. Ghormeh Sabzi is served with cooked rice (Chelow). Do not miss it on your travel to Iran.

The Northern cities of Iran have a variety of very delicious foods. Rasht and Deylaman are two of the northern cities of Iran offering diverse delicious foods such as Fesenjan, Mirza Ghasemi, and Baghali Ghatogh to tourists and travelers. Once travelling to the North of Iran, you will have the opportunity to enjoy making and eating such scrumptious meals.

### Khoresh-e-Fesenjan ④

Khoresh-e-Fesenjan (Persian pomegranate and walnut stew) is a very tasty stew integrated with Iranian culture. The ingredients are well-ground walnut, pomegranate sauce, and slow-cooked chicken or duck pieces. Khoresh-e-Fesenjan should be cooked on a low temperature to let the tastes blend and release walnut oil on the stew. The well-mixed ingredients make a sweet and sour taste that is really appetizing. Like many other Iranian stews, Fesenjan is also served with rice (Polo or Chelow).

### Mirza Ghasemi ⑤

Mirza Ghasemi is a vegetarian meal that is very tasty and delicious. The originality of Mirza Ghasemi refers to Gilan province located in the north of Iran. Mirza Ghasemi is the favorite food for those who love eggplants and garlic. To make this succulent dish, the eggplants are grilled until the skin is charred and peeled off. Then, lots of garlic, tomatoes, salt, and pepper are added to the grilled eggplants, and finally eggs are mixed with the ingredients to give it an excellent taste. Mirza Ghasemi could be served as an appetizer, side dish, or the main dish served with bread or rice. Since it is a simple meal made by grilling the eggplants on fire, you can easily make such a delicious meal once you are enjoying being in the forests of Gilan.

### Baghali Ghatogh ⑥

Baghali Ghatogh is an easy, healthy, and tasty dish. It is one of the quickest dishes getting ready in less than an hour. Baghali Ghatogh is also a vegetarian dish including aromatic dills, garlic, fresh beans, eggs, salt, and pepper. It is served with bread or rice.





# IRAN

## CULINARY TOUR

### Day 1 Tehran

Arrive in Tehran. Our guide will welcome you at Tehran International Airport and transfer you to the hotel.  
O/N in Tehran.

### Day 2 Tehran

After having breakfast, our Tehran tour gets started by visiting Golestan Palace and Bazaar. After eating lunch, we will visit Jewelry Museum. Then, we will return to the hotel and have free time.  
Hotel in Tehran

### Day 3 Tehran

After having breakfast, we will attend the cooking class to learn cooking Persian foods. The required ingredients will be bought regarding the type of food and chef's opinion. At the end of the class, we will visit Tabiat Bridge "the Nature Bridge" and return to the hotel.  
Hotel in Tehran

### Day 4 Rasht

After having breakfast, we will drive to the city of Rasht (326 km., 4 hours). After eating lunch in a restaurant of Rasht, we will drive to Bandar-e-Anzali (38 km, 1 hour) to enjoy boat riding in Anzali lagoon and watching various species of birds and plants.  
Hotel in Rasht

### Day 5 Rasht

After having breakfast, we will attend local cooking class to learn how to cook Gilaki (Gilanian) foods. We will buy the ingredients from Rasht Bazaar. Moreover, we will visit Kolah Farangi building, Sabzeh Meidan, and Shahr-dari Square. Finally, we will return to the hotel.

Hotel in Rasht

### Day 6 Deilaman

After having breakfast, we will go to Deilaman (83 km) and keep going toward the local house. Then, we will attend cooking class in the nature and make food there.  
Hotel in Rasht

### Day 7 Deilaman

After having breakfast, we will have a full-day tour in Deilaman, and then we will enjoy hiking in Larikhani jungle. After visiting Beshkaftah Sang and making food in nature by the help of tourists regarding what they have learned, we will return to Deilaman to visit Titi Caravanserai. Then, we will return to the local house, enjoy Gilaki folklore, and have some rest.

Hotel in Rasht

### Day 8 Qazvin-Tehran departure

After having breakfast, we will drive to Qazvin (117 km, 3 hours). In Qazvin, we will eat lunch and have a city tour that includes visiting Sepah Street, Jameh Mosque, Sa'd al-Saltaneh Caravanserai, and Sabzeh Meidan (Ali Qapu, Chehel Sotun Palace). Then, we will return to Tehran and go to the hotel (if booked) or drive to the airport for departure.







**One Land with**  
Four Seasons at Once



# AN ADVENTUROUS SPRING IN ASTONISHING NATURE OF IRAN

Author: Mina Bagheri

In ancient Persia, you will be as fascinated by the natural beauties and wildlife as much you are by the astonishing array of historic sites of the country. Because Iran covers a huge area it has an abundant number of natural attractions and in spring season it becomes the promise land for those who love fantastic sceneries and love to observe unusual birds or mammals in national parks and protected areas.

From Caspian shores to the coasts of Persian Gulf and Sea of Oman, the entire Iran is at its best in spring but the bests of best are Alborz and Zagros Mountains.

The cities on Caspian shore are magnificent destinations in all seasons but the spring season makes them even more mystic. The greens are at their brightest and the weather is absolutely pleasant. Gilan, Mazandaran, and Golestan are the provinces on the Caspian Sea coasts and this location has created their gorgeous sceneries.

To enjoy the fresh greenery of the north of Iran you can travel to this place in May, however, the travel season lasts until the end of summer.





# Escape the Ordinary

**A**lborz Mountains sitting on the south of the three provinces blocks all the humidity and clouds on their north side making summer days much cooler than in the central Iran. Siahkal, a little city in Gilan is one of the best destinations for the spring of Iran. The city has both flatlands covered by lush vegetation and mountainous areas. Caves, waterfalls, mausoleums, historic castles, and caravanserais in Siahkal plus its excellent weather are wonderful spectacles.

Dorfak peak (2700m) known as the roof of Gilan is an extinct volcano and is covered by forests from its base to the top. On the way to the top of this mountain, you will enjoy the scenery with the shepherds and flocks grazing on the rich grass of the mountain in thick fog and clouds.

A beautiful countryside on the east of Gilan is Deylaman. This region connects to Alborz Mountains on the south and to Dorfak Mountain on the east. Deylaman wilderness is mountainous with many caves, springs, and rivers and also more than 2000 years of human inhabitation in the region according to the pottery and copper tools found in the area.

Next we'll take you to the west of Iran to the soaring mountains, curving rivers, and deep valleys of Uraman in Kurdistan province, Iran. Uraman means the land of the sun; Ura or Ahowra meaning sun and Man meaning house or land.

Palangan, Hajji, and Howraman Takht are historic villages in Uraman. All are built on the slopes of Zagros Mountain and have stair-shaped architecture.

Palangan village dates back to the pre-Islamic era and its houses are made of stone. In fact, it is the only stepped terrace village in Iran with stone houses. In winter the mountains are covered by snow and they melt down on spring and summer and create stepped waterfalls and streams which make the weather cool and pleasant on summer days. There is a 400-year-old historic castle in Palangan that you can visit as well.

In Hajji as you go up the stairs in the village, stroll in the alleys with tall trees, colorful wild plants, and the big Sirvan River create one of the most striking sceneries before your eyes to refresh your soul.

And there is the gem of Kurdistan, Hawraman Takht. After a long journey on a hairpin road from Sanandaj, the stepped village will appear on the slopes. The village was the capital of Awraman's kingdom and it is a whole different world. Hawraman is a peaceful quite atmosphere sitting on the steep hillside with houses facing out the valley. Same as other stepped villages in Iran the roof of each house is the terrace of the house above. This village is a popular destination because of Pir-e Shaliar celebration that happens twice a year; once on February and the second time on May

and attracts. This event attracts a lot of tourists to the village every year.

The celebration is one thousand years old and is the wedding anniversary of Pir-e Shaliar with the daughter of Bukhara's king who was not able to hear or speak and was cured by Pir-e Shaliar. The king indicated whoever treated his daughter will marry her and Pir-e Shaliar was the lucky man. Playing Daf Drums, dancing Dervishes, and delivering speeches on Pir-e Shaliar's personality are the traditions of the day. The celebration starts with distributing walnuts in the village and goes on for three days.

Since Iran is a four-season country you will see every season vividly with the most glorious sceneries especial to that season. The magical spring comes with wild plants and flowers growing everywhere and it is the time to see the endemic plants and pick medicinal plants in the mountains.

One of the endemic flowers of Iran is *Fritillaria imperialis* known by the name inverted tulip or the Tear of Maryam among Iranian. It grows in the plains on west of Isfahan province and Chaharmahal Bakhtiari province. According to a myth, these flowers saw the murder of Siavash, one of the brave soldiers in the epic Shahname, by his enemies so the tulip bent out of sorrow and shed tears. The tears are actually the colorless sap that runs down the flower. This imperial flower is fully grown in May and lives for one month only. *Fritillaria imperialis* is a native to Iran and was taken to Europe by European tourists in 1576.

*Lilium ledebourii* that you can see in Gilan province of Iran starts its life in early May to the middle of May. Persian ironwood known as *Parrotia persica* is native to North of Iran in Alborz Mountains. The leaves of this deciduous tree are reddish-purple in spring, dark green in summer and yellow-orange in fall.

Iran at any season has numerous one-of-a-kind destinations from north to the south. The glorious and rich history of the country can be seen in so many jaw-dropping ruins and monuments in the country. Magnificent Persepolis, stunning mosques, and the fabulous natural sceneries make Iran a perfect destination for all seasons.



**Siahkal**  
Abundant caves, waterfalls, springs, and the most pleasant weather.

**Dorfak peak**  
Dorfak peak (2700m) known as the roof of Gilan

**Lahijan**  
Produces the finest black tea in the world.

**Palangan, Hajij and Howraman Takht**  
Masouleh of Zagros slopes.

**Persian ironwood**  
An endemic tree of Iran

**Fritillaria imperialis**  
Tear of Mary

**Caspian shores**  
Caspian is the largest inland sea in the world.

**Alborz Mountains**  
One of the two mountain ranges of Iran with the mighty Damvand in its central area.

**Deylaman**  
Lush lofty heights of Guilan.

**Howraman or Awraman**  
The land of sun

**Masouleh**  
A spectacular village with "The yard of the building above is the roof of the building below" architecture on slopes of Alborz.

**Lilium ledebourii**  
Chandelier flower.



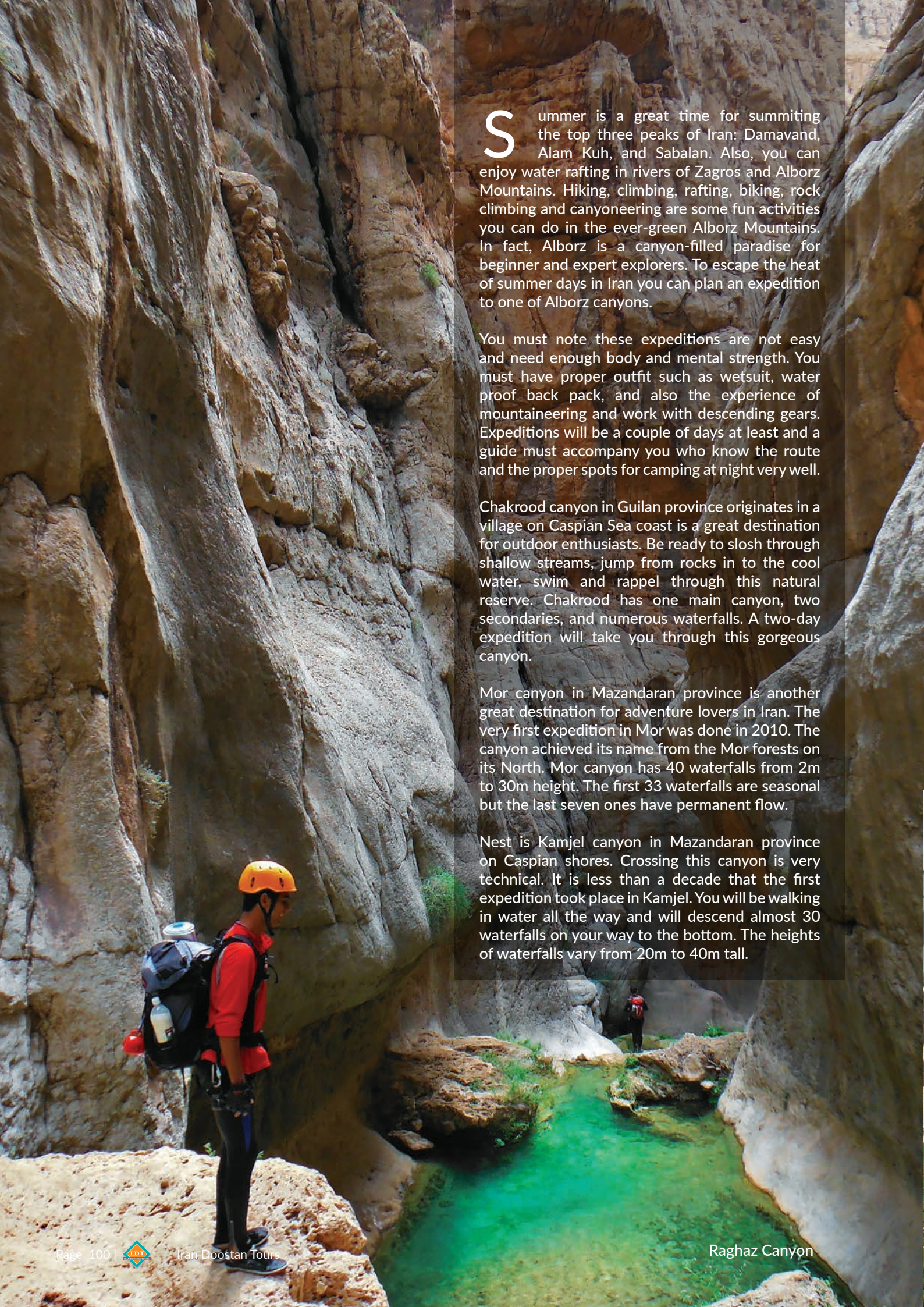
# COOL ACTIVITIES IN HOT SUMMER

Author: Mina Bagheri

Are you looking for a destination to plan an unforgettable summer adventure?

We must tell you that you will have remarkable expeditions in canyons, caves, and mountains of Iran. Of course, some of the world heritage sites will be on the list no matter why or when you are traveling to Persia. If you are going to visit Iran on summer we'll recommend the cooler regions of the country which are in northwest and west such as Azerbaijan provinces (eastern and western), Kermanshah, and Zanjan. To your surprise, we are going to introduce destinations in Fars province on the south of Iran too.





Summer is a great time for summiting the top three peaks of Iran: Damavand, Alam Kuh, and Sabalan. Also, you can enjoy water rafting in rivers of Zagros and Alborz Mountains. Hiking, climbing, rafting, biking, rock climbing and canyoneering are some fun activities you can do in the ever-green Alborz Mountains. In fact, Alborz is a canyon-filled paradise for beginner and expert explorers. To escape the heat of summer days in Iran you can plan an expedition to one of Alborz canyons.

You must note these expeditions are not easy and need enough body and mental strength. You must have proper outfit such as wetsuit, water proof back pack, and also the experience of mountaineering and work with descending gears. Expeditions will be a couple of days at least and a guide must accompany you who know the route and the proper spots for camping at night very well.

Chakrood canyon in Guilan province originates in a village on Caspian Sea coast is a great destination for outdoor enthusiasts. Be ready to slosh through shallow streams, jump from rocks in to the cool water, swim and rappel through this natural reserve. Chakrood has one main canyon, two secondaries, and numerous waterfalls. A two-day expedition will take you through this gorgeous canyon.

Mor canyon in Mazandaran province is another great destination for adventure lovers in Iran. The very first expedition in Mor was done in 2010. The canyon achieved its name from the Mor forests on its North. Mor canyon has 40 waterfalls from 2m to 30m height. The first 33 waterfalls are seasonal but the last seven ones have permanent flow.

Nest is Kamjel canyon in Mazandaran province on Caspian shores. Crossing this canyon is very technical. It is less than a decade that the first expedition took place in Kamjel. You will be walking in water all the way and will descend almost 30 waterfalls on your way to the bottom. The heights of waterfalls vary from 20m to 40m tall.

This one is the masterpiece of nature, Raghaz canyon in Fars province. It has breathtaking scenery with huge rocks, crystal clear water, and stunning waterfalls. It covers four kilometers with 64 waterfalls and 100 pools. The highest waterfall of Raghaz is 65m high and you must use gears to descend it. You can start the journey without any gear at the beginning since the falls are not too high and water is so clear that you can estimate the depth and just jump into the pool until you reach a waterfall that is 23m from then the route gets technical.

Kermanshah province of Iran is famous for having several unique and wonderful caves such as Ali Sadr and Parau. Ghooori Ghal'e is another incredible cave that we recommend you visit in your tour to Iran. Ghooori Ghal'e is one of the longest and most beautiful river caves of Iran and its formation dates back to 65 million years ago. In 1976 a group of biologists from France and Britain found this cave while they were looking for some mammals such as bats. They progressed into the 620m depth of the cave to a point that the water was up to the ceiling and they assumed they've hit the end of it but the cave goes deep into 3140m which was discovered in 1989. Throughout your journey in the cave, you will see very interesting stalactites looking like different animals or ice-cream next to beautiful natural pools. There is an area with stalactites that looks like drapes and when you touch them they create a sound like different musical instruments and it's called Beethoven area.

To make your summer journey in Iran even more unforgettable make sure you check out some historical attractions of Iran that are world heritage as well. Just make sure you will stay in cooler areas again.

Takht-e Soleyman literally means Throne of Solomon in West Azerbaijan province, is the fourth monument of Iran that was registered by UNESCO as a world heritage site. The structure belongs to the first millennium BC and during Sassanid era it gained high importance. Takht-e Soleyman complex functioned as an educational, religious, and worshiping place in the pre-Islamic era. 1800 years ago only Sassanid king and

high military people could come to this fire temple. Some historians believe the Sassanid rulers performed the special ceremonies before receiving their throne at the Azargoshasb. The main purpose of this historical remaining was for worship and religious ceremonies of Zoroastrian followers and its original name was Azargoshasb fire temple.

There is a lake in the complex that has an artesian spring source and Zoroastrians believe this spot is one of the main locations on earth where the energies merge together which makes this lake sacred. One interesting fact about the lake is that its temperature stays the same during summer and winter.

Have you heard about the Persian story of Shirin and Farhad? Did you know this story made Bisotun famous among Iranians?

Before the bas reliefs and inscriptions were translated by European researchers, locals believed the engraving tells the story of Shirin and Farhad, a tragic love story written by the great Persian poet Nezami Ganjavi.

The bas relief high on the lofty Bisotun Mountain has an ancient beauty and gives you a great sense of the days Persia was the most powerful empire in the world. This mythology is one of the most legendary stories and everyone knows it very well. The story ends with the tragic death of Farhad and it is the ending that made Shirin and Farhad such a great reputation. People still believe if you listen closely you will hear the sound of Farhad's ax on the mountain.

The inscriptions on mountain narrate the victory of Darius over Gaumata, a Median magus who led a rebellion against the king of Persia is one of the most famous and important documents in Achaemenian and world history.

Bisotun is a very valuable document not only for Iran but also for the world because it is the only official document that shows sovereignty and re-establishment of the greatest empire in the world by Darius I. It became a world heritage site in 2006.





### Chakrood Canyon

in Guilan province originates in a village on Caspian Sea coast is a great destination for outdoor enthusiasts.



### Kamjel Canyon

Crossing this canyon is very technical.



### Mor Canyon

Mor canyon has 40 waterfalls from 2m to 30m height. The first 33 waterfalls are seasonal but the last seven ones have permanent flow.



### Rag haz Canyon

It has breathtaking scenery with huge rocks, crystal clear water, and stunning waterfalls.



### Ghoori Ghal'e Cave

Ghoori Ghal'e is one of the longest and most beautiful river caves of Iran and its formation dates back to 65 million years ago.



### Takht-e Soleyman

literally means Throne of Solomon in West Azerbaijan province, is the fourth monument of Iran that was registered by UNESCO as a world heritage site.



### Bisotun Mountain

Stepped village on the mountain slopes



### Tabriz Bazaar

It is the heaven of Persian souvenirs such as handmade carpet, rug, and aromatic spices.




### Babak Fort

Perched at 2,300m above sea level on a cliff, the ruins of Babak Fort a Sassanid era structure is a valuable national heritage.

## 11 Arasbaran protected area

gorgeous scenery with 23,500 nomads living in different zones of it.



### Soltaniyeh

Arthur Upham Pope described it as the anticipating of Taj Mahal.



### Kandovan

An unusual looking village with ice-cream cone shaped houses carved in the rocks on a remote corner of Iran is one of the places we definitely recommend you to pay a visit.



# FALLING IN LOVE

## WITH THE PERSIAN FALL

Author: Mina Bagheri

Autumn is the season that nature wears its most fascinating colored gown. The gold, red, orange, purple, brown, and green against a thin layer of grey clouds in the sky pour in your eyes and haunt your soul to never forget the gorgeous scenery that has been swallowed by the magical fall.

Waking up to the mist of the morning with a view of the scarlet tree leaves in Alborz Mountains will awake the poet inside you like Nima, the famous contemporary Persian poet who was born and lived in Yoush.





Autumn is the best time to visit Hyrcanian forests of Alborz Mountains. Hyrcanian forests of Iran are ancient jungles surviving from the last stage of ice age on earth from 110,000 to 12,000 years ago. These beautiful and ancient woods carry millions of different DNA and genes making this location a green biology library.

There are more than eighty different plant species living in Iran's Hyrcanian woods with some rare kinds such as Beech (Fagus), Alder, Elm, Prunus avium or wild cherry. Hyrcanian forests existed in Europe as well but did not survive the cold climate of the region and went extinct. Caspian shores are warm and humid helping these plantations to survive. These forests are the inhabitant of Persian ironwood known as Parrotia persica native to the north of Iran. The leaves of this deciduous tree are reddish-purple in spring, dark green in summer, and yellow orange in fall.

"Cloud Forest" one of the fascinating natural phenomena in Iran occurs in the Hyrcanian forests of Semnan province, on the north of the city of Shahrood known as "The Little Continent". Every day before the sunset temperature falls, the atmosphere starts to change and the clouds start rushing in to the woods to make an ocean of clouds in the valleys. Naming Shahrood as a little continent comes from the great biodiversity in the city. The lavish green forests on the north, the central desert and national park of Turan, the inhabitant of Asiatic Cheetah, on the South, a great variety in climate, customs, handicrafts, and agriculture products all over the Shahrood brought up its nickname. Mausoleums of Bayazid Bastami "King of the Gnostics" and Sheikh-e Kharanaghi two of the greatest masters of Sufism in Iran are in Shahrood and receive so many visitors during the year. Sheikh-e Kharanaghi, a highly respected mystic, is famous for his saying "Anyone who enters this house feed him without asking about his faith" that expresses his humane and righteous philosophy in life. Let's move from the evergreen woods of Alborz to the ancient province of Khuzestan in southwestern Iran, the birthplace to Elamites one of the world's early civilizations. Iran is famous for having a hospitable nation, but people of Khuzestan surprise the rest of Iran for being super kind and welcoming.

The Elamite kingdom (2400 to 539 B.C.) that arrived long before the Persians built a ziggurat in the city of Dur Untash, the current city of Shush that is the largest ziggurat in the world today. Finding Chogha Zanbil ziggurat, that remained unfinished, had a great contribution to our understanding of the period of the Elamites. It is a UNESCO world heritage site.

Shushtar historical hydraulic system is described by UNESCO "as a masterpiece of creative genius". This water system is a series of canals, tunnels, bridges, and dams bringing water from Karoon to create a moat around the city of Shushtar and transport water for irrigation,

watermills, and private reservoir. Shushar water system was built by Roman prisoners from the war in third century B.C on existing foundation from earlier.

Bakhtiari, Lor, and Qashqai tribes who live on the foot of generous Zagrus Mountains add to the splendor of Khuzestan. In old days these strong and proud people buried their warriors who died fighting in battles with a giant stone lion sculpture on their graves. Lion symbolizes the powerful and royal soul resting underneath them.

Make sure you try Sboor fish, the most favorite food among the Khuzestani people. A savory and spicy sauce called Hashoo made with cilantro, garlic, and tamarind paste roasted with spices and turmeric goes on the Ilisha fish (Tenulosa ilisha) known as Sboor that is baked in the oven or over the fire.

Next, we will go toward the east to the dry and thirsty lands of Yazd, a city that has been sitting on the road of merchants of silk, saffron and turmeric since antiquity. Yazd the city of adobe houses and wind towers in the desert is the birthplace of Zoroastrian religion. The holiest Zoroastrian fire, Tower of Silence, and Dowlat Abad Garden are some attractions you must visit in Yazd.

Zoroastrians used sky burial for their dead. They believed once a body ceased to live it becomes in danger of getting in contact with demons and becoming impure and it can contaminate the soil and water if it is buried without proper filtrations. To prevent the infiltration Zoroastrians used open burials. They left the bodies on top of the Tower of Silence, built on a hill, so the flesh will be eaten by vultures and the bone will be bleached out by the sun and other natural elements. Then the clean bones were placed in ossuaries inside or close to the tower. The use of this method dates back to 4th and 5th century B.C.

Zoroastrianism and Islam are coexisting in Yazd for ages now, giving this city even more value and characteristic. Jame mosque of Yazd is the turquoise blue gem of the city with its high ornate minarets and gorgeous tile-work and a serene setting that fondles your spirit.

In Yazd, there is a Fire Temple where you can visit the most sacred Zoroastrian fire in Iran. The fire so sacred that it is displayed behind a glass screen to prevent pollution from people's breath! Yazd Fire Temple is the only Atash Bahram in Iran. There are nine Atash Behrams in the world; eight of them are in India and one in Yazd, Iran. According to Zoroastrian religion, there are different types of fire, such as fire from a baker, fire from a potter, fire used in burning a corpse, fire from the house of any Zoroastrian, etc. and the fire burning in an Atash Bahram contains all the types giving it the highest grade. Yazd Atash Behram's fire has been burning since 470 AD in different fire temples in Fars province and was brought to its current location in 1934.



Dowlat Abad garden in Yazd is one of the nine Persian gardens inscribed on UNESCO world heritage sites. Persian Garden is an expression of love, literature, poetry, architecture, art, life, and a masterpiece of bright human creativity. Chahar Bagh literally meaning four gardens refer to the structure of these gardens that is divided into four sections by water fountains. Sophisticated water-management is a significant achievement in combining natural elements with human creativity to become a central feature in palaces, mausoleum, private residences, and public buildings.

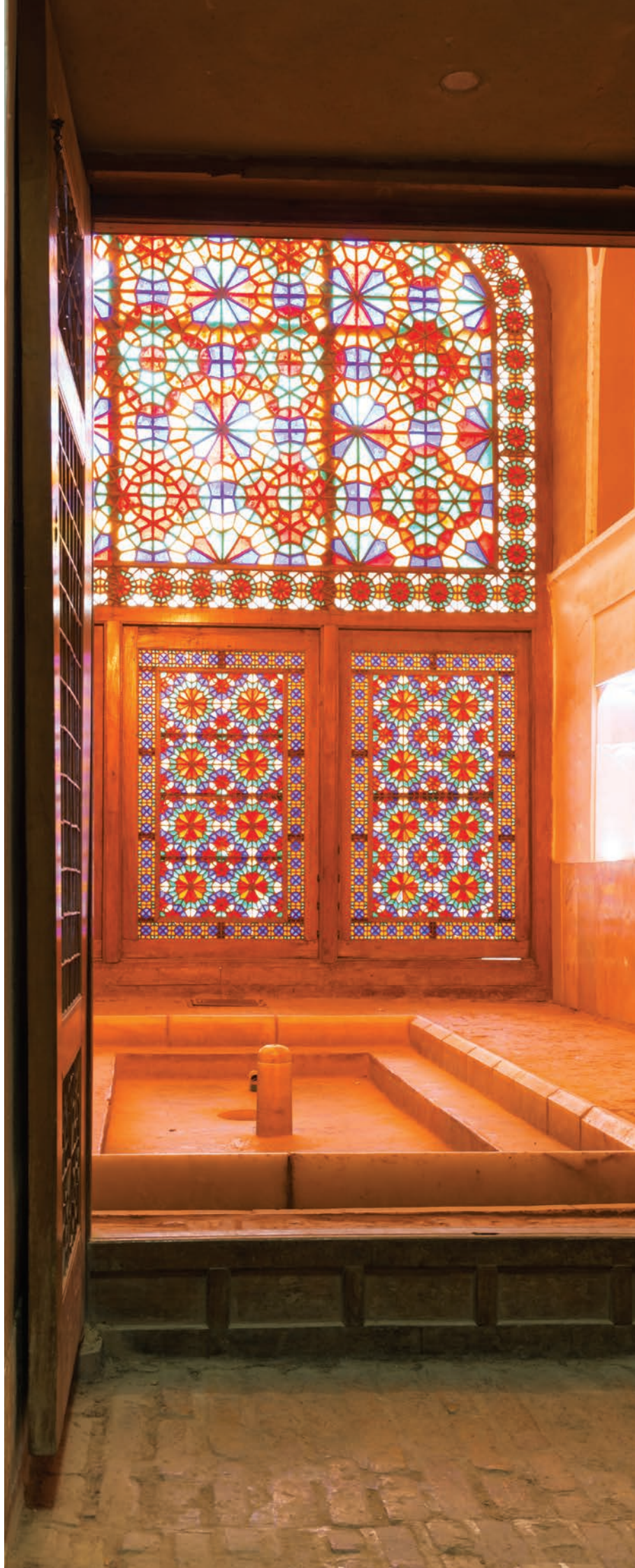
Persian Garden was born on the days of Achaemenid Dynasty and has been the inspiration for many gardens ever since; Taj Mahal is a remarkable example. Pairidaeza, in Avestan language, meaning a celestial garden became the inspiration to create a heavenly paradise on earth. Creating a lush garden with elegant fountains in the middle of desert adds to the beauty and charm of the Persian Garden.

Do not miss the delicious part of Yazd: Haj Khalifeh pastry shop, a one hundred-year-old confectionary creating art work in this industry. Make sure you will pay a visit to this museum of the most delicious and fresh traditional Iranian pastries. Qotab, Baklava, Pashmak, Haji Badam (Persian almond macaroon), and Cake Yazdi are some of the traditional Persian cookies and cakes that are prepared by the most talented confectioners following the recipes that have been passed down through generations as a treasured legacy.

All the tourists who travel to Iran claim Yazd is one of the loveliest parts of their travel, and they never expected to be fascinated by such exotic architecture and glamour in a city in the heart of a desert.

Now let's travel a bit more toward the south to Kerman province, home to such incredible sites as Bam Citadel, Lut desert, Cultural Landscape of Maymand, Shazdeh garden, and one of the main producers of pistachio in Iran. A newly discovered canyon, Roghe, close to Rafsanjan in Kerman province is an absolutely must visit sites of Iran. Roghe canyon another phenomenon created by the hands of nature has twenty thousand years of history.

Mid fall is the season of visiting and staying in the magical desert. Kaluts of Shahdad in Lut are remarkable creations formed by the wind, water, and soil and are incredibly beautiful. Shahdad and its Kaluts were enlisted by UNESCO in the world heritage sites in June 2016, as the



very first natural attraction of Iran. Lut desert is universally known as one of the most mysterious spots and it carries the title of the hottest place on earth as well.

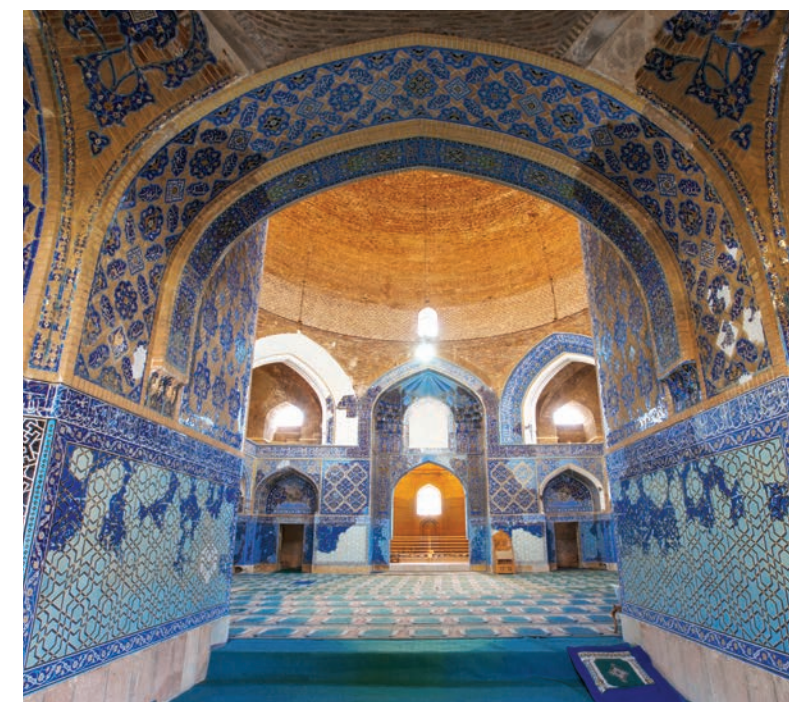
Ganjali Khan Complex, a Safavid era structure, is still seating in the old section of Kerman consisting of a school, square, caravansera, bathhouse, Ab Anbar (water reservoir), mint, mosque, and a bazaar. The bathhouse, converted to an anthropological museum in 1971, has a stunning architecture with ornate tile-works, paintings, and plaster-works on the ceiling, walls, columns, and the floor.

Meymand, a village trapped in time, located at the end of a valley at the southern edges of Iran's central mountains is one of the primary human residences in the Iranian Plateau. It's stayed so untouched over the years that even in their local language there are words from the ancient Sassanid and Pahlavi languages. Meymand villagers live in temporary settlements in spring and autumn. They are semi-nomadic agro-pastoralists. Meymand has a semi-arid climate with cold and harsh winter and hot summers. Meymand and its hand carved caves, will take you to the days Iranians were worshipers of Mithra and mountains were sacred to them. Still to this date scientists are not sure about the first inhabitants of Meymand who carved the houses in the stone.

To make your journey even better and more exciting try Kerman's Boz Ghormeh. A traditional and super delicious food special to this city made with diced meat, peas, garlic, onion, Kashk (drained sour milk), and special spices.

Traveling to Iran is always a good idea, at any season, to any location. We cannot agree on just one specific time to enjoy the glory and magnificent of Persepolis or to be fascinated by the dreamy blue tiles of Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque or the eye catching ancient bridges in Isfahan. Now that the glorious autumn is here, it's another great opportunity to journey across Iran, this one of a kind destination in the world.

Autumn is the season of pomegranate, Mehregan celebration, and the Yalda. The season of shorter days, softer lower-angle sun, long shadows, and the foliage turning red and falling off the trees. Life goes on, nature never stops destroying and rebuilding itself and all this is to tell us to not stay still, go discover the world, see all there is to see, touch, smell, and listen to all the pleasant and unpleasant out there, to finally discover yourself.







**Hyrcanian forests**  
of Alborz Mountains



**Asiatic Cheetah**  
Turan park



**Shushtar historical hydraulic system**  
Shushtar



**Bakhtiari, Lor, and Qashqai tribes**  
lives in Zagrus Mountains



**Bam Citadle**  
Kerman



**Lut desert**



**Cloud Forest**  
Semnan province



**Bayazid Bastami Mausoleums**  
Shahrood



**Chogha Zanbil ziggurat**  
Susa



**Jame mosque**  
Yazd



**Cultural Landscape of Maymand**



**Dowlat Abad Garden**  
Yazd



A young girl with brown hair, wearing a colorful patterned headscarf and a yellow lace-trimmed garment, is shown in profile, holding a stem of white Behbahan Narcissus flowers with yellow centers. She has her eyes closed and a peaceful expression, as if smelling the flowers. The background is a lush field of similar flowers under bright, natural light.

# EXPERIENCE THE WARMTH OF SUMMER IN WINTER

Author: Mina Bagheri

We believe that winter is another great time to travel to Iran, and here we will tell you why and where to go!

If you travel to Iran in winter, it is best to go to the warm regions on south of Iran. The places like Khuzestan, Persian Gulf islands, and Sistan & Baluchet province. Plus the only Iranian Island of the Caspian Sea that hosts migrant birds from Siberia, but this one is not warm.

Winter is the only time you can go skiing on Alborz Mountains; also enjoy the sunny beaches of Persian Gulf on the same day. On winter you can see one of the most beautiful flowers in the world, the Behbahan Narcissus, in Khuzestan province of Iran.

Narcissus flowers are engraved on prehistoric Elamite objects. The tools, spoons, and buttons that were buried with “Kidin Hutran” an Elamite king had Narcissus carvings on them. This beautiful flower that blossoms in winter grows naturally in the plains of Behbahan city in Khuzestan. Iran’s Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts, and Tourism Organization listed this flower as a national treasure of Iran. Behbahan Narcissus was known as the most beautiful flower of 1992 Floriade exhibition in Zoetermeer, Netherlands.



Khuzestan is known as the birthplace of the nation and has very long and rich history for being the home to such powerful and civilized kingdoms as Elamite and Archaemenid dynasties. Khuzestan has an abundance of cultural sites with the Susa, Shushtar Hydraulic System, and Tchoghazanbil are UNESCO world heritage sites.

Going further down into the waters of Persian Gulf, there is a dolphin shaped island with remarkable natural attractions and lovely people, called Qeshm Island. Qeshm is the biggest island in the Strait of Hormoz and has a great wildlife including birds, reptiles, dolphins and hawksbill sea turtle. You name it from caves, wells, forest, beaches, valleys, canyons, to the only Geopark in the Middle East, Qeshm has it all.

There is a mysterious looking valley in the island that locals call it Star Valley because they believe the unusual columns and arches have shaped after a star hit the earth and created this supernatural landscape. Star Valley is known as one of the wonders of Qeshm Island in the Persian Gulf and is a mystery for the residents and they believe ghosts and aliens live in this valley.

Qeshm Island is one of the thirsty parts of Iran, close to the equator, with very low amounts of rainfall every year. Water has always been the most valuable element for people in these areas, more valuable than gold or gems. Centuries ago people dug 366 wells in the stones to save the clean water of rainfalls; the wells are called Tala Loft Wells. They are dug in schist stones in a hole next to a coral cliff and the historic Naderi Castle in a village named Loft. According to scientists the number 366 represents the number of days in a leap year. Every well has a name and each well was used per day throughout the year. The bottoms of the wells are covered by plaster that helps the water to stay clean and cool for a long time.

Interesting to know that Qeshm was colonized by Portuguese troops for more than a century and here is the story. In 1506 Afonso de Albuquerque, Duke of Goa who was a Portuguese general and a "great conqueror," discovered the Persian Gulf on his way to the Portuguese colonies in Asia. In 1516 he came back and conquered the Hormoz Island and built a strong fortress for his troops on the island. Followed by several attacks of Afonso to Hormoz Island an agreement was signed between Iran and Portugal that made Hormoz the official colony of Portugal. Many more fortresses were made in Qeshm, and other islands. In 1623 Shah Abbas's military, with the help of British troop took back the island from Portuguese and in 1660 after 150 years of dominating over the Persian Gulf, their period came to an end in the region.

Qeshm Island is a mysterious land. Besides the wonderful natural beauties, it has rich history and culture. For the last six hundred years, fishing is the main job of people on the island. One of the interesting traditions in Qeshm is Noroz-e Sayad, meaning fisherman's New Year. This New Year does not have a set date on the calendar; it is the first day of the hot season which is usually on July 18 or 19. None of

the fishermen goes fishing on this day, because this day is only for celebration, playing traditional games, swimming, and making delicious pastries with dates. Locals believe on this day the fish must be free without the stress of being hunted to protect them from going extinct.

This is a ritual that parents teach to their children as well to respect the nature and all the animals living on earth. Probably the most famous attraction of Qeshm is its Hara Forests that has mangrove trees. Hara forest is a supernatural forest that immerses in water during the high tide and it appears again on the ground on the low tide. You can go into the forest with a boat and a local guide for sure, to enjoy this unique beauty. The tree roots are out in the open air, they absorb saltwater filter out the salt and save the sweet water. Over the years these trees have become used to the tides and the salt water. The Hara forest attracts a lot of local and migrant birds in the year especially during the winter because it has warm waters with plenty of fish to eat. These forests exist in Chabahar as well. Chabahar in Sistan & Baluchestan province is the house to the only crocodile of Iran as well.

Sistan & Baluchestan is full of wonders in terms of natural attractions and the cultural heritages. "It's the closest thing to Mars on Earth," This is how a group of US geologists, who visited the Sistan & Bluchestan province of Iran in early 1970, describe this region. It is the only habitat of the Iranian Short-Muzzle crocodile that locals call it Gando.

Gando lives in a legally protected area with the same name (Gando), on the shores of Oman Sea at Sistan and Baluchestan. Gando is extremely shy making it hard for the guards to count their population accurately. This mugger crocodile is listed as "Vulnerable" on the IUCN Red List and it can be found in India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Nepal, and Iran. The local people chose the name Gando for this reptile and they love it, respect it, and protect it because it is a symbol of blessing and godsend to them.

Shahr-i Sokhta, meaning burnt city is one of Iran's world heritages in this province. The ruins are still under further excavations. The city was found around 3200 BCE and was abandoned in 1800BCE. According to the discoveries, the city was on the route connecting Mesopotamia and Iran with the Central Asian and Indian civilizations, and as far away as China. Shahr-i Sokhta was a very developed and high technology city where archeologists found traces of brain surgery, an artificial eyeball, dice and caraway seeds, and the world's first animation! And another incredible factor is that not any kinds of weapon or war equipment were found in this city.

Lenge (Dhow) the largest handicraft made in Iran is the art work of the men living on the coast of Persian Gulf, since the 17th century. Lenge in Iran sails the waters of Persian Gulf only. It has always been the only vessel for sea journeys, fishing, trading, and pearl hunting in the gulf of Persia.

Now we want to introduce the only Iranian island in the Caspian Sea that every winter hosts thousands of birds from Siberia and thousands of bird watchers who come from all parts of Iran to just get a glance of these lovely guests.

On the far right corner of the Caspian Sea, there is a very long peninsula extending out in to the body of water, Miankaleh peninsula. On the right tip of Miankaleh, there is the only Iranian island in the Caspian Sea called Ashuradeh. The island was initially connected to Miankaleh but the connection was cut off by digging the Khozeini Canal. Miankaleh and Ashuradeh are protected areas.

Ashuradeh has appeared from the deposits of the sediments carried by the rivers into the sea and it was an archipelago having three islands but over the time the two smaller islands were buried under the water making Ashuradeh the only island in the Caspian Sea. The island has no inhabitants. The only people in it are those who work in the fishery. The island used to be inhabited people but after the 1990 flood, they moved to Bandar Turkmen.

Almost half of the world's famous caviar of the Caspian Sea is fished in here.

In the 1830s the island was occupied by Russians and there is a ruin of their castle still on the island.

The island is off the coast of Bandar Turkmen, a beautiful town absolutely worth the visit with gorgeous Turkmen Kilims made by the gifted hands of the Turkmen ladies. With two hours' drive, you will see Gonbad-e Qabus Tower, the only world heritage site in Golestan province.

Iran is renowned for its history, architecture, elegant gardens, scrumptious food, and hospitable people. With 21 cultural heritages and one natural site inscribed on UNESCO World Heritage List, it is one of the countries with the most tourist attractions in the world. Iran is not famous as a ski destination, but it has thirteen international ski pistes. And they are not just ordinary pistes, they all have long skiing season and good quality powder snow.

Dizin in Alborz Mountains, north of Tehran established in 1969, is the crown jewel of all ski pistes of Iran. Shemshak, Darbandsar, and Tochal are the other ski zones of Alborz Mountains. Alpine skier and snowboarder are welcomed in all pistes of Iran.

**So grab those skis on your winter tour to Iran!**





**Narcissus flowers**  
Behbahan, Khuzestan



**Tchogha zanbil Zigurat**  
Susa



**Portuguese Castle**  
Qeshm Island



**Shahr-i Sokhta (burnt city)**  
Sistan and Baluchestan



**Ski pistes of Iran**  
Dizin, Shemshak, Darbandsar, and Tochal



**Star Valley**  
Qeshm Island



**Naderi Castle**  
Loft village



**Hara Forests**  
Qeshm Island



**Caspian Sea**



**Gonbad-e Qabus Tower**  
Golestan province



# ADVENTURE Tours





# Experience Adventure in Gorgeous Iran

Long history, outstanding architecture, elegant gardens, delicious food, hospitable people, astonishing landscapes, and remarkable wildlife all represent Iran as a great destination to explore. Iran embraces mountains, deserts, forests, caves, canyons, rivers, Geo-park, and national parks. Since Iran covers a vast area, it takes advantage of various landscapes and different climatic conditions resulting in a remarkable biodiversity. Therefore, it has the most inspiring places for adventure travelers from around the world.

To explore the glory of Iran, Iran Doostan Tours Co. has designed comprehensive tour packages and itineraries. It has been providing the best adventure tours to Iran and the best adventure itineraries over the past twenty years of experience. It will provide you with whatever that you desire including hiking, trekking, climbing, biking, canyoneering, watching wildlife, sand boarding and safari, and meeting nomads. The adventure tours can also be combined with the cultural tours to help tourists get the most out of their travel to Iran.

Bring your spirit of adventure and our professional guides will do everything for you to enjoy the exotic experience of wandering in deserts and jungles to discover the diversity of nature.

## Mountain Biking

Iran's mountains have a great variety of scenic sceneries with rocky gorges, cliffs, valleys covered with beautiful orchards and pastures colored with wild flowers, snow-capped summits, and lush forests. We provide the most amazing single-day and multiple-day mountain biking and combinational multi-activity guided tours in Iran both on and off the road. A wide range of routes and trails are available for tourists with different levels of ability. The routes will take you to the forests, deserts, hillsides and mountains. We supply top range bikes and safety equipment for our customers

## Meeting nomads

While you pass through the scenic slopes of Alborz and Zagros mountains, the nomads will welcome you and you will enjoy seeing their traditional lifestyle surviving from centuries back. Your dream to live a different life will also come true by meeting nomads, enjoying the companionship of its hospitable men and women, exploring their traditions, and tasting their delicious foods and drinks.

## Water Adventures

Persian Gulf on the South, Caspian Sea on the North, and wild rivers running in Alborz and Zagros mountains are great places for various kinds of water activities.

We operate various water adventure tours such as whitewater rafting, kayaking, river trekking, scuba diving, snorkeling, and water skiing. World class whitewater guides accompany our rafting tours and support them by safety kayaks.

## Safari expedition and sand boarding

Though it is a relaxing experience to be surrounded by the vast, tranquil, and gold sand dunes, exploring deserts of Iran can also be very exciting. Iran has two great deserts. One is Dasht-e Kavir that expands from south of Alborz Mountains down to the central region and the other is Lut Desert on the south-east, a UNESCO world heritage site. Iran Doostan Tours Co. has the experience of operating more than 60 safari tours through pristine areas in Iran's tough deserts since 2010. It offers you the best safari tours heading toward untouched deserts. Exciting safaris let you enjoy the wonderful landscapes and pass through the most abandoned lands. Varzaneh, Rig Zarin, Rig Yalan, and Rig-e-Jen are among the best desert destinations to pump adrenalin into your veins. Sand boarding is also one of the very interesting activities in deserts of Iran. Since the soft sand makes falling more pleasant, sand boarding is more fun than snowboarding. You can

slide down the soft and gold sands of high dunes with your board to add more adrenaline to your travel.

## Bird watching

Since Iran has a variety in biodiversity and biogeography, it boasts of having a rich ecosystem for various bird species. Iran has more than 500 bird species. Red-headed bunting, Passerine, and Caucasian grouse are the remarkable birds in Iran that attract the attention of bird-watchers. Turan and Golestan are national parks considered as two of the great spots in Iran for bird watching.

## Canyoning

There are great forests and canyons spread at four corners of Iran. We provide fully guided canyoneering tours for tourists having different levels of ability. Whether you are an experienced adventure lover or an amateur starter, our guides will support you throughout the entire route. All our tours are supplied with canyoneering equipment and gears.

## Caving & Spelunking

Iran has over three hundred caves. Some caves are fully explored while some others need to be explored. Moreover, there are many unexplored routes in newly found caves. Therefore, we have the opportunity to offer great itineraries for these destinations. Half a day tours and multiple day tours with different levels of difficulty are available for those interested in caving and spelunking. We provide safety, protective, and support gears. Our expert trained guides will teach you the techniques if you are eager to see the underground world.

Iran Doostan Tours Co. has a social responsibility of making economic profit in tourism industry and creating innovative plans to make a friendship between the environment and tourists. The tours are also guided by professional and well educated guides to provide a unique experience in the ancient Iran. In our everyday practice, we follow CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) and SRB (Socially Responsible Business) models to protect our natural environments and be beneficial to the locals based on ecotourism principles.



# Iran Ski Tour

*An amazing nine days ski tour on the highest mountain of Middle East (Damavand) and the Second highest peak of Iran (Alam Kuh)*

Alam Kuh and Takht -e- soleiman area, especially the southern side of the mountain is a beautiful and attractive place for ski tours in the spring in Iran. Due to heavy rainfall in winter in the area and the existence of many peaks over 4000 meters high- peaks such as Lashgarak , Gardonkooh , Chaloos and many other peaks- it is a suitable place for skiing up to the mid-spring. In the spring and in favorable conditions, the main peak Alam Kuh (4811m) is also good to ascend. It is a good place for acclimatization before climbing Damavand. You can see a spectacular view of Alborz Mountains over the 4000 meters high peak.

Mount. Damavand is the highest ski resort in Iran for ski mountaineering, ski tours, wild ski expedition and snowboard. Damavand receives heavy snowfalls in winter because it is in the vicinity of the Caspian Sea. The south route is low in technical difficulty and it is ideal for ski and snowboard. Skiing on other sides is more difficult. Depending on the weather, the amount of snowfall is different each year. The ski season may start from mid-November and last until mid-May. It is a good idea to check the amount of snow in the area before fixing your plan and traveling to the area.

## Day 1

Arrival - Transfer to the hotel and shopping in Tehran. Drive through Chaloos road (one of the most beautiful roads of Iran) to Marzanabad and Roudbarak. Have overnight stay in MSFI hut and walking around the hut.

## Day 2

Departure by car 4WD to the camp (Tange Galoo) because of the snow and the conditions of the porters. Staying in camps and taking a short ski around.

## Day 3

climb on Lashgarak 4200m summit and ski to the camp.

## Day 4

Climb on the summit Chaloos 4550 m and ski to the camp.

## Day 5

Return to the hut. Drive to the Caspian Sea, walk around the city and Mahmudabad market. Have overnight stay in a hotel or motel.

## Day 6

Drive to Reine village via Haraz road. Have overnight stay in Reine hut.

## Day 7

Drive to camp 2 (1 hour off road) 3000m and climb to reach camp3 (Bargah) about 4200m. We have about 4-6 hours climbing and have overnight stay in hut. (Private room with hot water, blanket, bed, etc.)

## Day 8

Summit day. Start climbing early in the morning. We have about 6-8 hours climbing to the top, skiing to the hut and back to camp 2 and Reine camp and overnight stay in Reine.

## Day 9

Visit amazing mineral hot springs near Reine. Drive to Tehran and get ready for departure.









# Canyoneering in Iran

Rafting, hiking, biking, trekking, spelunking, caving, mountain biking, and canyoneering are all the adventurous activities you can enjoy in your travel to Iran, the country that is usually known for its ancient civilization and rich culture. They all satisfy the passion and excitement; however, canyoning is for the ones who enthusiastically wish to get an adrenaline rush.

Canyoning or canyoneering is a sport that combines the adventure of hiking, rappelling, climbing, bouldering, cliff jumping, and sometimes breathtaking swims. Mother Nature offers the most stunning canyons all over the world in America, Africa, Canada, Italy, France, Switzerland, and Iran.

Iran has spectacular canyoneering spots surrounded by gorgeous mountains of Alborz and Zagros. Some are located in the north of Iran surrounded by the lush green jungles and some are located in the south of Iran hidden behind the hot heart of dry mountains.

The canyoning history in Iran dates back to over sixty years ago when it was tried by military characters at first. In 1984, a team of two canyoneers descended Anderesm canyon successfully and it was a milestone in practicing canyoning more seriously. The next decades, great canyons of Raghaz in Fars province and Kamjel in Mazandaran province were explored and descended in order to develop the exciting sport of canyoning in Iran.

If you want to get your feet wet in Iran's canyoning, there are amazing canyons to satisfy your desire. Raghaz, Kamjel, Chakrood, Eshkevar, and Anderesm are among the most stunning canyons of Iran. You will enjoy rappelling down rock faces, hiking through dense jungles, trekking in the heart of mountains, and descending roaring waterfalls. The canyons of Iran vary in the degree of difficulty. For instance, Raghaz canyon is suitable for those who want to enjoy jumping into the water and swimming as well as those who want to experience a technical canyoneering, while Anderesm canyon is an unattainable dream for amateurs. Anderesm with deep gorges and high waterfalls is the most challenging canyon of Iran.

Raghaz canyon located in Fars province is one of the most technical and adventurous canyons of Iran. It is surrounded by dry mountains and it has such scenic scenery that one can hardly believe. The astonishing Raghaz canyon has more than 60 roaring waterfalls and so many pools with crystal clear water. The journey is started without any gears at the beginning; however, to descend more waterfalls, technical equipment and exciting jumps into the pools are needed. The highest waterfall of Raghaz called Azaraksh (Thunder) is 65m high and the deepest pool called Kabootar is 20m deep. The best time for canyoning in Raghaz is from April to August when you could enjoy jumping into the turquoise water of pools and also enjoy its many springs.

Kamjel canyon located in Mazandaran province in the north of Iran is another technical canyon. It is less than a decade that the first expedition took place in Kamjel. Depending on the technical degree of the plan, you might need waterproof shoes and clothes, headlamp, canyoning gears such as wetsuit, dry bag, and so forth. In Kamjel,

you will get adrenaline rush from descending more than 30 waterfalls and enjoying fresh air and wilderness; however, it is necessary to check the weather forecast first, because it is very dangerous to go there during the rainy days. The best months to experience canyoning in Kamjel is from March to the end of September. You will remember it as one of the most adventurous activities during your travel to Iran if you are guided by an expert tour guide.

Chakrood canyon in Gilan province is another great canyon for outdoor enthusiasts. You would enjoy the gorgeous nature of Gilan jungles before reaching Chakrood canyon. Chakrood has many waterfalls; however, only some of them are suitable for canyoneering. The highest waterfall is approximately 30m high and you need to be perfectly equipped to descend it. Slog through shallow streams, jump into the cool water, swim, and rappel down the gorges to get the best out of your canyoneering there. When you go deep inside the canyon, you would enjoy sound of water streams and chirping of little crickets. In order to have an expedition in Chakrood canyon, you must professionally apply the rock climbing skills and have all necessary equipment.

One of the other technical canyons in the same area is Eshkevar canyon. It is located near Ramsar and it usually takes more than one day to descend the canyon technically. Eshkevar is a great place for canyoning adventures and you will enjoy hiking in the wild nature as well as rappelling water jumps and jumping into pools. Anderesm is the most challenging and difficult canyon of Iran. It is located in Karaj-Chalus road. Surrounded by lush green trees, numerous waterfalls, and massive gorges, it is a perfect adventurous spot for challenge-lovers. The number of waterfalls exceeds 30 with height varying from 5 to 25m. To descend the roaring waterfalls, one needs to use technical equipment. Anderesm canyon also known as Tanehdar canyon has breathtaking gorges surrounded by 70m rock walls and massive waterfalls. Anderesm canyon is the most challenging canyon of Iran and skillful canyoneers are the only ones who could successfully descend it.

Though the nature of canyoneering is mingled with challenge and danger, you will be equipped with life jackets, wetsuits, technical ropes, and other required equipment. Moreover, our expert guides will accompany you to make sure you are safe and have a great time.



# Raghaz Canyon

## Day 01

Activity note: Arrival

Arrive at Shiraz Airport, welcome, transfer to hotel and check in.

O/N: Hotel in Shiraz

## Day 02

Activity note: Shiraz sightseeing and drive to Darab

In the morning, have breakfast in the hotel and then sightseeing in Shiraz include Vakil Bath, Sara-ye Moshir and Karim Khan Citadel. Have lunch and leave Shiraz and drive to Darab City (255 km – about 3:15 min). Arrive in Darab and free time till dinner.

O/N: Local house in Darab

## Day 03

Activity note: Canyoning in Raghaz

Very early in the morning, wake up and drive toward Raghaz Canyon with truck (60 Km - about 2 hr) and start trekking (about 2 hrs), have breakfast in the canyon, change clothes and get ready to start canyoning (about 8 hrs). During canyoning have picnic lunch. Drive back to Darab in the evening and rest till dinner.

O/N: Local house in Darab

## Day 04

Activity note: Drive back to Shiraz

In the morning, have breakfast and leave Darab, drive back to Shiraz (255 km – 3:15 min) and check in. Have lunch and rest. In the afternoon, sightseeing in Shiraz includes Shah Cheragh Holy Shrine, and tombs of Hafiz and Saadi. Have dinner and return to the hotel.

O/N: Hotel in Shiraz

## Day 05

Activity note: Drive to Isfahan

Have breakfast in the hotel, visit Nasir-ol-Molk Mosque and then leave Shiraz. Drive to Isfahan (485 km – about 2:45 min), en-route visit Persepolis and Pasargadae and have lunch. Arrive in Isfahan in the Afternoon and check in. Visit Si-o-Se Pol Bridge at night, have dinner and return to hotel.

O/N: Hotel in Isfahan

## Day 06

Activity note: Sightseeing in Isfahan and departure

Have breakfast in the hotel and then start sightseeing include Naghsh-e Jahan Square, Ali Qapu Palace, Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque, and Bazaar. Visit gaz (Persian nougat) manufacturing workshop. After lunch, visit Vank Cathedral and then transfer to the airport for departure flight.







## Explore Kordestan by riding your bikes in Iran

Riding bikes on the mountainous routes and in the alleys of gorgeous villages and gardens of Iran is an adventurous activity adored by biking lovers. It is a good chance to explore wonderful villages of Iran such as Bisaran, Paygelan, and Tangi Sar. Cycling through Iran is a different type of travelling that provides the opportunity to live with the rural people and get familiar with and engaged in their lifestyle. It is a great feeling to spend nights in beautiful village houses or camp in the heart of nature by the riverside while getting enough energy for another biking day.

Biking through mountainous routes or dense jungles will let you explore hidden beauties ideal for photography. Moreover, you can enjoy the locals' companionship and have tea or other drinks with them. It is also very interesting to visit popular tourist destinations of Iran and its cultural and natural sites such as Golestan Palace in Tehran, Takht-e-Soleyman historical site near Takab, Dome of Soltaniyeh in Zanjan (all inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List), and Karaftoo cave near Saez while riding bikes through their streets.

# Astonishing Mix of Nature and Culture

## Day1 Tehran

Arrive in Tehran. Our guide will welcome you at Tehran International Airport and transfer you to the hotel. O/N in Tehran.

## Day2 Sanandaj

After having breakfast, our Tehran tour gets started with visiting Golestan Palace and the Gate of Bagh-e-Melli (National Garden). After eating lunch, we will visit Jewelry Museum and National Museum of Iran. Then, we will go to Mehrabad Airport and have a flight to Sanandaj. O/N in Sanandaj

## Day3 Sanandaj - Doulav - Tangi Sar

After having breakfast, we will leave Sanandaj and go toward Sanandaj-Kamyaran road. Then, we will start riding bicycles on a mountainous route, visit the stair stepped village of Doulav and its great gardens, then visit Qaderieh Khanqah. After having lunch, we will drive to Tangi Sar village and have dinner there, and stay the night at a local house.

## Day4 Mirgovar - Dakhan

After having local breakfast, we will visit Tangi Sar village and start biking toward Nayer village and Mirgovar countryside. After wandering strolling around the green gardens of Mirgovar countryside, we will have lunch in the local house and get some rest. At noon, we will drive toward Dakhan Countryside until we reach the path leading there. Then, we will ride on the bikes to reach the stone and stair stepped homes of Dakhan. O/N in camp.

## Day5 Bisaran - Paygelan

After having breakfast and biking in the gorgeous nature of the region, we will ride on bicycles toward the historical village of Bisaran, keep going to the old village of Jan, ride in the alley gardens, eat lunch in Jan village, ride the bikes in the mountainous path to reach Paygelan, and rest in the village house of Paygelan.

## Day6 Qalehji village - Darkey village -

### Horaman Takht village

After having breakfast, we will visit Paygelan village and drive to Qalehji village. We will ride the bikes toward Darkey village through the wonderful valley of "Darband" and the scenic sceneries of Avalan Mountain. We will eat lunch in the jungle, and then we will enjoy both biking and off-roading from Pir-e-Rostam countryside to Horaman Takht village. O/N in a village house.

## Day7 Sanandaj - Saez - Karaftoo cave

After having breakfast, we will go to Sanandaj (3 hours, 156 km.) to visit its historical places and colorful bazaar. In the afternoon, we will go toward Saez to visit Karaftoo cave and ancient castle of Ziwiye. O/N in camp close to Karaftoo cave.

## Day8 Takht-e-Soleyman - Takab

After having breakfast, we will ride the bikes toward the historical region of Takht-e-Soleyman in order to visit Takht-e-Soleyman and Zendan-e-Soleyman, eat lunch, enjoy Qinerjeh spa, and take advantage of the untouched nature of Belqis Mountain overlooking Takht-e-Soleyman. Later, we will drive to Takab. O/N in a Hotel

## Day9 Drive to Tehran

After having breakfast, we will drive to Dome of Soltaniyeh (3:15 minutes, 232 Km). We will visit Oljaito dome (Soltaniyeh) as the largest brick dome of the world. Then, we will have lunch and drive to Tehran. O/N in Tehran.

## Day10 Tehran-IKA

After having breakfast, we will go to IKA and get ready for departure.





# The Best Trekking Trails in Iran

A country with an ancient civilization embracing various cultural attractions! This is the image that crosses one's mind when thinking about Iran. There are fewer people who think of it as a country that welcomes adventurous activities especially trekking. With diversity in mountainous landscapes, deserts, and forests, Iran provides a great opportunity for those who wish to travel to Iran for having a great experience in the best trekking trails.



located in Azerbaijan with 4811m height is the third highest mountain in Iran. It is a dormant volcano with a crater lake at its summit that is frozen during the winter. The foothills of Sabalan Mountain are famous for their great spas.

## Trekking through forests of Iran

Forests make approximately one-tenth of the land in Iran. Fortunately, more than 2,000 plant species considering oak, maple, and walnut grow in its forests. Some of the plants and animals are endemic species of Iran. Forests such as Hyrcanian (Caspian forests), Arasbaran, and Zagros have a great capacity for trekking and it would be a wonderful and pleasurable experience for trekkers.

Hyrcanian forests are rich in biological diversity. The history of ancient Hyrcanian forests dates back to the Tertiary period. It covers parts of five provinces of Iran including Ardabil, Gilan, Mazandaran, Golestan, and North Khorasan provinces. Hyrcanian forests embrace valuable

threatened species and areas of unbelievable natural beauty extended on the north of Iran and on the south and south west of Caspian Sea.

Arasbaran forest is also an ecologically-rich region having a rich flora and fauna. It is a Biosphere Reserve in East Azarbaijan province. Arasbaran forest has wonderful plant diversity and is home to a variety of mammals, birds, and reptile populations. Those who love trekking through the Arasbaran forest, have also the chance to visit Shahsavand nomads living in that region. Moreover, they can visit the historical Babak Fort as one of the popular tourist attractions of Iran.

Zagros oak forests in the western region of Iran are also picturesque. Zagros oak forests enjoy a variety of animal life and plant diversity. While oaks are the major fruits of Zagrosian forests, Zagros oak forests are in danger of destruction. Therefore, practical solutions are required to protect scenic scenery, wildlife, and plant diversity of beautiful Zagros forests.

## Trekking through deserts of Iran

Not only is Iran fascinating due to the beauty of mountain landscapes, but also it is mesmerizing due to the splendor of great deserts. As the most arid areas of Iran, deserts approximately make 20 percent of the land of the country. Dasht-e-Kavir and Lut Desert, the vast deserts of Iran, offer a unique experience to the trekking lovers. Dasht-e-Kavir or Great Salt Desert is the largest desert of Iran extended from Alborz Mountains to the Central Plateau.

Lut Desert inscribed on UNESCO World Heritage list is also a valuable legacy having its mysterious nature and unique features. According to NASA observations, Gandom Beryan in Lut Desert was announced as the hottest place on Earth in 2004 and 2005. As the world's 26th largest desert with incredible rock formations and salt plains, it has turned into trekkers' dream.

The deserts of Mesr, Maranjab, Shahdad, and Varzaneh are among the greatest deserts of Iran providing various activities such as camel riding, sand boarding, desert safari, trekking, visiting astonishing yardangs and different types of landscapes for tourists who want to experience trekking in Iran. Moreover, Matinabad Desert Eco-camp-the first and the only eco-camp in Iran- is a brilliant example of desert accommodation that offers the aforementioned activities in line with sustainable tourism principles.

## Trekking through mountains of Iran

Astonishing though it might seem, the reality is that mountains approximately make half of the vast area of Iran. Iran with 1500 peaks over 3000m is one of the most mountainous countries in the world. Alborz and Zagros are two significant mountain ranges covering north and west of Iran, while other mountains are scattered in different parts of the country.

The Alborz (Alburz or Elborz) mountain range in the north of Iran has been extended from the border of Azerbaijan along the coast of Caspian Sea to the Aladagh Mountains of Khorasan. Many high peaks and spectacular waterfalls are located in the heart of Alborz mountain range.

Mount Damavand is the highest peak in Iran and the Middle East. Moreover, it is the highest volcano in Asia. It has a short distance from Tehran, therefore it is one of the most accessible high mountains and it seems great for the trekkers who travel to Iran. Mount Damavand, a volcanic mountain integrated with Persian mythology, is approximately 5610 m. high. According to the legends, a three-head dragon was chained to the mountain forever.

Damavand Mountain is a symbol of the glory of Iran and it is called the roof of Iran. It offers a great opportunity for climbing and trekking with different levels of difficulty during the four seasons of the year.

Talysh Mountains (Talesh Mountains) are also located on the Alborz mountain range. Tourists who experience trekking in Talysh Mountains have the chance to get familiar with Talysh, Gilac, and Azeri-Turkish languages, their rich cultures, and sometimes their nomadic lifestyle. Tochal Mountain is located on the Alborz mountain range as well. Since it is very close to Tehran metropolitan area, it is a preferred trekking trail for those who live in Tehran or wish to experience trekking in Tochal Mountain.

The Zagros mountain range has also its fantastic trekking and hiking routes. The peaks of Zagros have steep slopes, very narrow gorges and deep valleys. Oak forests spread throughout the Zagros Mountains, inverted tulips plains, Kohrang Lake, Popular hiking route of Zarivar Lake, the breathtaking beauty of Uraman Takht village, high peaks of Zard Kuh, and Dena long trail through Zagros Mountains are some of the attractions of Zagros trekking trail. Sabalan, or Savalan Mountain as an isolated mountain





# Asalem-Khalkhal Trekking Tour in IRAN

## Day 01

### Tabriz

Arrive in Tabriz airport, transfer to the hotel in Tabriz and check in.

O/N in Tabriz

## Day 02

### Kandovan -Tabriz

Have breakfast, head towards Kandovan cave village and visit its unique landscape, go to Tabriz bazaar- the first bazaar inscribed on UNESCO World Heritage Sites- for visiting and shopping, Have lunch. After lunch, visit the Constitue House of Tabriz and the Blue Mosque.

O/N in Tabriz

## Day 03

### Tabriz-Khalkhal-Andabil- Khar Khuni village

After having breakfast, drive to Khalkhal (348 km- 3:45 min) and have lunch there. Then, drive to Andabil, start trekking (about 2-3 hours) from Andabil to Khar Khuni village and set up camp, free time for taking some rest and having dinner.

O/N in campsite

## Day 04

### Nav Village – Lakeh Tashun village - Asalem

After breakfast, start trekking through the jungle. En route, take some rest and photos as well. Have lunch outdoor in Nav village. After lunch, continue trekking to Lakeh Tashun village. Then, drive to the hotel and have dinner.

O/N in Asalem

## Day 05

### Gisum- Qaleh Rudkhan- Masuleh

Have breakfast, head towards Gisum through the fantastic jungle road leading to the sea, and enjoy hiking in Gisum jungle park and beach. After lunch, move toward Qaleh Rudkhan (Rudkhan Castle) (95 km- 1:45 min), visit the castle in about 2 hours, go to the stepped village of Masuleh (50 km- 1:10 min), and go to the local guest house and free time for rest and dinner.

## Day 06

### Masuleh- Rasht- Qazvin

After having breakfast, visit the village of Masuleh to get familiar with local culture and buy some handicrafts. Then, move to Rasht (77 km- 1:45 min), have lunch there, drive to Qazvin (172 km- 2:30 min), and go to the hotel.

O/N in Qazvin

## Day 07

### Qazvin- Tehran

After eating breakfast, Have a full day city tour in Qazvin including Sepah Street, Jameh Mosque, Sa'd al-Saltaneh bazaar (covered bazaar), Sabzeh Meydan (Ali Qapu, Chehelsootun Palace, City Museum, or Stone Museum, Qajar Bathhouse (Anthropology Museum). After having lunch in a restaurant, head to Tehran (150 km- 2:10 min), and go to the hotel.

O/N in Tehran

## Day 08

### Tehran

After eating breakfast, have a full day city tour in Tehran including Golestan Palace and bazaar. After lunch, visit National Jewelry Museum, and National Museum of Iran (Archeological Museum). Have dinner in Darband or Darakeh, and transfer to the hotel.

O/N in Tehran

## Day 09

### Tehran-IKA

Departure and transfer to IKA



A vibrant Little Green Bee-eater is perched on a dark, thorny branch. The bird has a bright green body, a pale blue throat, and a distinctive red eye. Its long tail feathers are visible, hanging down. The background is a clear, bright blue sky with some blurred green foliage in the foreground.

# Bird Watching

Little Green Bee-eater

Iran an ancient country with rich culture, avian biodiversity, and hospitable people offers you a wide range of habitats and climates. It is an exceptional destination that connects three biogeographic realms including Palearctic, Afrotropic and Indo-Malaya creating unique opportunity for exciting birding. This least known country for birders now considered as a Western Palearctic region, with a number of key species sure to attract them and the ones love exploring more in Western Palearctic.

This country has highly desirable possibilities for bird watching tours such as watching Steppe Eagle, Grey Francolin, Goliath Heron, Indian Pond Heron, Oriental Honey Buzzard, White-eyed Buzzard, Crab-plover, Great Stone-curlew, Lichtenstain and Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse, Crowned and Spotted Sandgrouse, Alexandrine and Rose-ringed Parakeet, Spotted Owlet, Syke's Nightjar, White-breasted Kingfisher, Pied Kingfisher, Little Green Bee-eater, Indian Roller, Pallid Swift, Sind Woodpecker, Black-crowned Sparrow and Hoopoe Lark, Desert and Indian Sand Lark, Oriental Lark, Pale Crag Martin, Long-billed Pipit, White Eared and Red Vented Bulbul, Eversmann's Redstart, Turkestan and Bay-backed Shrike, Southern Grey shrike, Steppe Grey Shrike, Afghan Babbler, Hume's and Hooded, Eastern Pied Wheatear (Variable Wheatear), Black-throated thrush, Graceful Prinia and Scrub Warbler, Hume's Whitethroat and Asian Desert Warbler, Oriental White-eye, Eastern Rock Nuthatch, Striolated Bunting, Trumpeter Finch, Indian Silverbill, Common Myna, Black and Ashy Drongo. In our birding tour, we will explore hillsides of Alborz mountains Range and southern part of the country including wetlands.

North part of Tehran is almost 1800 m high situated on hillside of Tochal Mountain. We go birding in an area covered with trees and a river flowing in the valley with rocks and stones. We might watch birds such as Eversmann's Redstart a wintering migratory bird from Russia and Mongolia and North West China. The size is almost as same as common Redstart and male has longitudinal white patch on wing coverts and rusty red mantel and most of underparts.

Kish Island has a unique bird; Red-vented Bulbul. It is in the size of White-eared Bulbul with fine pale scalloping on upper parts and breasts and with red undertail-coverts.

Qeshm Island, the biggest island in Persian Gulf, has a geo-park. The island is almost dry except mangrove forest where different migratory birds take advantage of it for wintering. The birds we might see in Qeshm include Indian pond heron and Great Knot.

Geno Mountain is an isolated mountain and also the highest place near Bandar Abbas. Habitats consist of stony plains with scattered vegetation, amygdales, and pistachio woodlands. The species are typical of arid mountains in the country's dry south region with a number of Indo-Malayan species present. In this region, the highlight bird is Hume's Wheatear. In Bandar Abbas coast line that is an intertidal zone, our highlight bird is Pacific Golden Plover that is a wintering migratory bird. It is very similar to bigger European Golden in all plumages, best separated by generally slimmer structure, voice and underwing.

The mangrove forest of Tiab is one of the best environments for Indian Pond Heron, Dalmatian Pelican and waders. Around Minab, you will see Sind Woodpecker as well. It is very similar to Syrian Woodpecker; however, it is a little smaller than Syrian one. Moreover, the adult male has all-red crown and nape and unlike Syrian rear moustache is joined to upper parts by black bands.

Azini Wetland is a unique place for the ones who love bird photography. It is the only mangrove forest in this tour we can find *Rhizomorpha macronata*. The wetland has intertidal zones, mudflat, sand dunes bushes and shrubs. We look for Oriental White-eye. This species is native even in Indonesia considering the fact that its habitat is Indo-Malaya and recently added to Iran Avifauna. It is the only species in the family of Zosteropidae in Iran.





# BIRDING IN 10 DAYS

Tehran- Kish – Qeshm – Bandar Abbas – Minab – Azini –Bandar Abbas - Tehran

Best time: November-March  
(to visit wintering migratory birds)

## Day 01

Activity note: Arrival  
Arrive in Tehran – Imam Khomeini International Airport (IKA), transfer to hotel (45 km) and check in  
O/N: Hotel in Tehran  
Total driving distance: 45 km

## Day 02

Activity note: Birdwatching in Tehran  
Early morning, we start bird-watching in one of the Tehran urban parks, then hiking in hillsides of Tochal Mountain for bird-watching.  
O/N: Hotel in Tehran  
Total driving distance: 45 km

## Some possible birds:

Golden Eagle, Alexander Parakeet, Laughing Dove, hooded crow, White-eared Bulbul, Syrian Woodpecker, Chukar, Black-throated Thrush, Gold Crest, Common Chiffchaff, Rock Bunting, Eastern Rock Nuthatch, Common Kestrel, Eurasian Sparrow Hawk, Red-billed Chough, Eversmann's Redstart, Black Redstart

## Day 03

Activity note: Fly to Kish Island  
Early morning check-out and drive to Mehr Abad Airport, fly to Kish Island, transfer to hotel and early check-in, and start bird-watching in Kish. After lunch, continue birdwatching and return to the hotel, rest till dinner.  
O/N: Hotel in Kish Island

## Some possible birds:

Crested Honey Buzzard, Osprey, Red-vented Bulbul, Cattle Egret, Slender-billed Gull, Purple Sunbird, Crested Lark, Turkestan Shrike, Graceful Prinia (Graceful Warbler), Common Myna, Black-crowned Sparrow-lark, Little Green Bee-eater, House Crow

## Day 04

Activity note: Driving and sailing to Qeshm Island  
Sailing to Bandar-e Charak (Port) (32 km) and drive to Bandar-e Pol (Port) (205 km), short sailing to Qeshm Island by landing craft (ferry) (2.5 km), drive to traditional guest house (37 km), free time and local sea food.  
O/N: Traditional guest house in Qeshm

## Some possible birds:

Eastern Imperial Eagle, Steppe Eagle, Egyptian Vulture, Common Gull, Caspian Gull, Indian Sand Lark, Brown-necked Raven

## Day 05

Activity note: Boating and birding in Qeshm  
Full-day bird-watching, depend on low and high tide we go boating and birding and also drive for birding in a mudflat coast (65 km). Today we have time to see and buy some local handicrafts and help local people in south of Island according to sustainable ecotourism. Enjoy local food for lunch and dinner.  
O/N: traditional guest house in Qeshm  
Total driving distance: 150 Km

## Some possible birds:

Marsh, Terek Sandpiper Broad-billed Sandpipers, Ruddy Turnstone, Eurasian Oystercatcher, Bar-tailed Godwit and, White-tailed Lapwing, Black-tailed Godwit, Eurasian Oystercatcher, Great Knot



Indian Pond Heron  
Photo by : Abraham Shokouhi



Osprey  
Photo by : Mohammadreza Kashfi



Indian Sand Lark  
Photo by : Abraham Shokouhi



House Crow  
Photo by : Abraham Shokouhi



Egyptian Vulture  
Photo by : Abraham Shokouhi



Eversmann's Redstart  
Photo by : Abraham Shokouhi



Striolated Bunting  
Photo by : Abraham Shokouhi



Turkestan Shrike  
Photo by : Yashar Sadafzadeh



Curlew Sandpipe  
Photo by : Abraham Shokouhi







Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse  
Photo by : Abraham Shokouhi



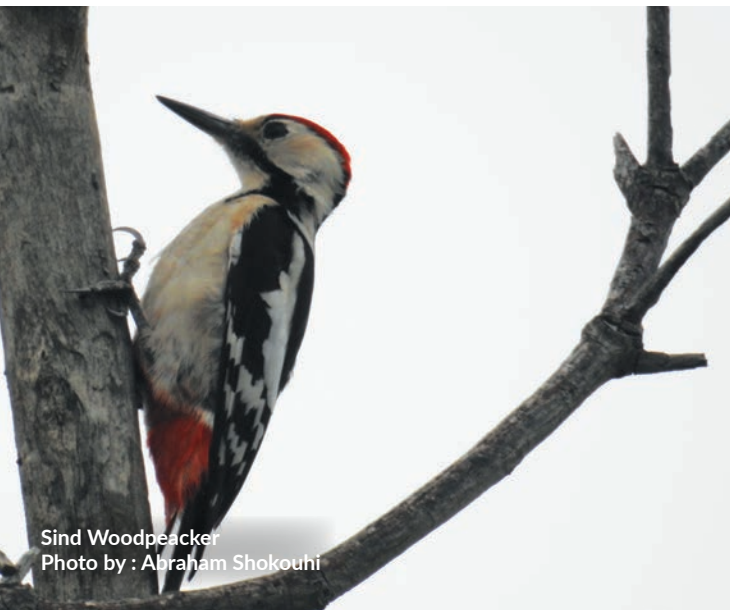
Eastern Rock Nuthatch  
Photo by : Yashar Sadafzadeh



Great Stone Curlew  
Photo by : Abraham Shokouhi



Hume Wheatear  
Photo by : Abraham Shokouhi



Sind Woodpecker  
Photo by : Abraham Shokouhi



Crab Plover  
Photo by : Yashar Sadafzadeh



Red-fronted Serin  
Photo by : Mohammadreza Kashfi



Steppe Eagle  
Photo by : Abraham Shokouhi

### Day 06

Activity note: Birding in Geno Mountain and Bandar In the morning, drive to port (about 38 km) and sailing back to Bandar-e Pol by landing craft, drive to Bandar Abbas (about 145 km), on the way birding in Geno Mountain Protected Area. Arrive Bandar Abbas and have lunch and check in. In the afternoon, birding along Bandar Abbas Coast and return to the hotel.

O/N: Hotel in Bandar Abbas  
Total driving distance: about 183 km

### Some possible birds:

Long-legged Buzzard, Afghan (Common) Babbler, Pale Crag Martin, Long-billed Pipit, Orphean Warbler, Hume's Wheatear, Eastern Pied Wheatear, Isabelle Shrike, Blue Rock Thrush, Eastern Rock Nuthatch, Saunder's Little Tern, Pacific Golden Plover, Broad-billed Sandpiper, Lesser Sand Plovers, Greater Sand Plover, Kentish Plovers, Grey Plover, Greenshank, Whimbrel, and Temminck's Stint

### Day 07

Activity note: Birdwatching in Minab and Tiab Port Very early in the morning, get up and have breakfast in the hotel, check out and drive to Minab (about 110 km), depend on high tide and low tide we arrange the best time for boating and birding in Tiab mangrove forest near Minab (25 km). Today, we go for birding in Minab mango and palm gardens.

O/N: Hotel in Minab  
Total driving distance: about 125 km

### Some possible birds:

White-eyed Buzzard, Black winged Kite, Red-wattled Lapwing, Grey Francolin, Spotted Owlet, Indian Roller, Rose-ringed Parakeet, Bay-backed Shrike, Sind Woodpecker, Graceful Prinia, Little Green Bee-eater, Bonellie's Eagle, Black Kite, Eastern Orphean Warblers, Indian Silverbill, Indian Pond Heron Bar-tailed Godwit and Eurasian Curlews, Marsh Harrier.

### Day 08

Activity note: Birding around Minab and in Azini Wetland Early morning, have breakfast in the hotel and then drive to Azini Wetland for boating and birding, on the way birding in a semi-arid region and a village with palm Gardens, have local food for lunch in a local house and then continue birding. In the evening, drive back to Minab and a short rest till dinner.

O/N: In Minab  
Total driving distance: about 290 km

### Some possible birds:

Shikra, Hen Harrier, Striolated bunting, Sind Woodpecker, Hooded Wheatear, Desert Lark, Desert Wheatear, Persian Wheatear, Southern Grey Shrike, Steppe Grey Shrike, Scrub Warbler, Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse , Crowned Sandgrouse, Spotted Sandgrouse, Asian Desert Warbler, Persian Wheatear, , Sooty Gull, White-cheeked Tern, Greater Spotted Eagle, Marsh Harrier, Osprey, White-breasted Kingfisher, Greater Thick-knee Clamorous Reed Warbler, Oriental White-eye

### Day 09

Activity note: Fly to Tehran from Bandar Abbas In the morning, we have free time in Minab and if missed an important bird we have another chance to find it. Drive back to Bandar Abbas, have lunch and transfer to airport, have a flight to Tehran and transfer to the hotel and have dinner.  
O/N: Tehran  
Total driving distance: about 110 km

### Day 10

Activity note: Departure Transfer to IKIA for departure flight.  
Total driving distance: about 45 km





# THE ASIATIC CHEETAH

the endangered rare species of plains of Iran

By Mohammad Gaeini

The Asiatic Cheetah, also known as Iranian Cheetah, once present in different places of Asia, has become extinct in those places and has only survived in the protected areas in the boundaries of Iran. Maybe that is why it is sometimes called as Iranian Cheetah.

It is critically endangered species in Iran demanding collaboration of the United Nations, the government, private organizations, and research institutions.

Undoubtedly, the best supporters are people. All attempts were once focused on the introduction of this rare species to the public. In 2014 FIFA World Cup Brazil, the Iranian soccer team appeared with shirts depicting Iranian Cheetah logo. As a result, the Iranian players were called high-speed cheetahs. It aimed for the national awareness of urgent need to protect this threatened animal. From that time, nearly all people have heard its name at least one time! Now, all attempts are directed to save this endangered cheetah.

## Shadows in Deserts

"Shadows in Deserts", a documentary produced by Fathollah Amiri about Asiatic Cheetah, could be the best interpretation for this amazing member of the family Felidae in the vast Iran's plains.

Wildlife observation is very difficult in Iran due to the vast area of the country, the small number and sparse population of wildlife species, fear from human, and lack of safe places to visit. It is even more difficult when it comes to the Asiatic Cheetah! According to the Iranian Cheetah Society (ICS), there are only less than 40 cheetahs in Iran at present. On the other hand, this small population is spread over an area of about one fourth of Iran in 7 provinces.

Wildlife researchers have discovered another way for tracking the cheetahs to collect data on the number and the behavior of them: the camera traps. They set up the cameras on locations they guess these animals pass by according to the signs to be found. The trap cameras have some sensors that take photos or videos of the animals as soon as they appear and the cameras sense movement in the area.

## Cheetah identification based on its unique spot pattern

Each cheetah has its own unique spot pattern just like the fingerprints in human being. The experts investigate the photos taken by the trap cameras to identify the cheetahs

based on these unique spots. Thanks to ICS attempts, some Iranian cheetahs have identification cards now. By these cards, researches can monitor cheetahs and their population demographics more effectively.

## Tear streak, a natural protection against sun for the world's fastest land animal

Cheetah, the member of the family Felidae, is the fastest runners on land. It has a long body with quite long legs. It is light tan in color with small round black spots all over its skin. It has a small head. There are two streaks named tear streaks or tear marks running from the inside corners of its eyes to the outside edges of its mouth. These streaks help the hunter cheetah reflect the glare of the sun while hunting.

The flexible spine, large lungs and heart, wide nostrils, and the long muscular body have made this big cat-like animal as the fastest land creature. It can attain the speed of 100 kph in only 3 seconds with quick high jumps.

## The cheetah habitat

The Asiatic cheetah used to live in the vast open lands and steppes. Today, it can be found in Dasht-e Kavir in the eastern part of Iran. The national parks, the protected areas, and the wildlife sanctuaries in the provinces of Semnan, Khorasan, Yazd, Kerman, and Isfahan are the main habitats. To enter these areas, one must take a legal permission from Iran Department of Environment and be accompanied with a forester or an expert. Though there is a rare chance of watching a cheetah, but enough signs could still be found in its habitats.







*Travel brings power  
and love back to your life.*

*Rumi ,Persian poet*



# LET'S GO TO OUR ECO-RESORT MATINABAD

A NEW BEGINNING FOR THE FRAGILE IRANIAN DESERT

Matinabad Desert Eco-resort and Organic Farm, the first and only Eco- resort in Iran, established in 2008, about 60 km south of Kashan, is recognized as one of the most unique practices in Iran. It is the practitioner of the universal codes of CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) and SRB (Socially Responsible Business) to promote sustainable and responsible tourism.

To satisfy all desert guests' tastes, three different kinds of accommodation are offered: rooms in the style of Safavid caravanserai, Koomeh (local hut-style accommodation), and tent.

Matinabad desert enjoys its native flora and fauna that catch visitors' attention. There are lots of Tamarix or Salt Cedar and Haloxylon (Gaz va Tagh literally) shrubs and trees in the area. The Persian ground jay, a species of bird that is endemic to Iran, lives there too. It could be a great opportunity for those who are interested in bird-watching and desert nature.

## Awards

In 2014, Matinabad Eco- resort was introduced as one of the 18 best practices in sustainable ecotourism by UNDP. In 2015, Mr. M. Ali Ashraf Vaghefi, the managing director of Iran Doostan Tours, received Dr. Taghi Ebtakar International Award for establishing the first Eco- resort in Iran.

## Sustainable Ecotourism Goals

One of the main goals of Matinabad Eco- resort is to help protect the local environment, improve the quality of life of local communities, preserve the local society culture and promote sustainable economic benefits for the local society. All the staff comes from local society. This has caused a great decline in rural to urban migration. As a result, agriculture and farming have been developed. Matinabad Eco- resort has played a major role in inhabitants' employment, education, hospitality training and some other aspects of life. Local products, such as handicrafts and herbs are sold at Matinabad Eco- resort souvenir shop to support local community.

During almost one decades of existence, Matinabad Eco- resort has had a major positive impact on desert environment and wildlife and in local people's lives, especially on education and employment.



## Accommodation

Accommodations in this unique Eco- resort in the heart of the desert, built using local materials, have been designed in three various styles to satisfy different tastes: Safavid caravanserai style rooms, traditional village style rooms named Koomeh, and tents, all equipped with modern eco-friendly facilities.

The rooms of Caravanserai are equipped with air conditioner, bathroom, toilet, two beds, refrigerator, and TV set. There is the possibility of adding an extra bed if it's needed as well. The inside of the rooms is designed using thatch, brick, and plaster to let the guests feel being in a traditional Iranian desert home. There are two special suites called Shahneshin (the place of the King), and Gooshvareh. Shahneshin has a panoramic view of the beautiful desert and farms. Gooshvareh is the large beautiful room with the capacity of 8 guests.

Koomeh is a mudbrick single room, in the form of local hut style, with a dome shaped roof as the best natural way of air circulation. Matinabad Eco- resort has 13 Koomehs. They are equipped with air-conditioners, heaters, two beds with the possibility of adding one more if needed, bathroom, and toilet.

The tents are fully equipped for a comfortable stay in the desert. In order to prevent insect bites, mosquito nets are used in summer days. When it is cold, a heater or Korsi (traditional Iranian heater) will make the air in the tent pleasant. Rug, mattress, pillow, blanket, and sheets are available according to the number of people that have reserved the tent. Electricity is available too. There is enough space between the tents to provide adequate privacy for the guests and they are located close to the main complex, baths, and restrooms.

## Activities & Entertainment

This award-winning Eco- resort provides its nature lover guests with exciting outdoor desert activities, such as camel riding, bike riding, desert trekking, sand surfing, star gazing and bird watching, all in line with ecotourism, in the unique desert natural environment. It provides children with a safe educational playground as well. Desert tours and visits to the nearby historical and cultural attractions are available too. Delijan (a kind of carrier) is also available for taking people to the sand dunes.

## Restaurant & Café

In Matinabad traditional café, different traditional Iranian drinks are served. There is also an outdoor café with a beautiful view of the surroundings and Karkas Mountains in the distance. On the other side of the Eco- resort, there is a traditional restaurant where different kinds of ceremonies are held on different occasions. Sometimes, live music is performed there according to the occasion. In the main restaurant of the Eco- resort constructed based on the traditional architecture, different traditional foods are served. All food ingredients are organic products from Matinabad organic farm or bought from locals. Wi-Fi is available in the traditional café too.

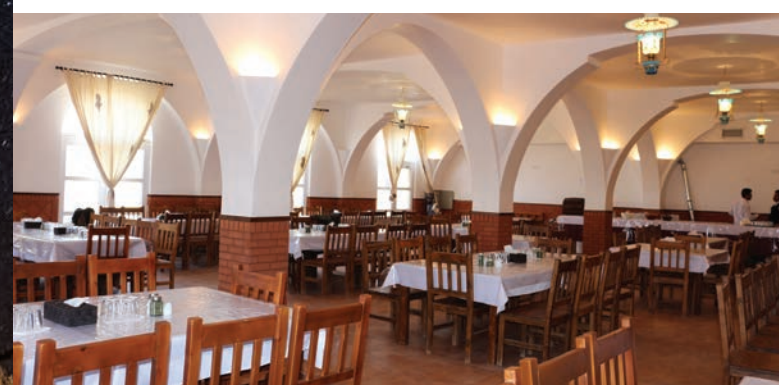
## Energy Supply & Waste Management

In Matinabad Eco- resort and Organic Farm, green technology is used to preserve the fragile environment of the desert. 70% of the energy needed for heating and cooking comes from solar energy- the sustainable, renewable, inexhaustible non-polluting free source of energy, with no emission of carbon dioxide or any greenhouse gases- rather than fossil fuels. It can provide enough energy for heating water for about 100 people per day. In cold seasons, Korsi- the Iranian traditional heating system- is available in tents and koomehs for those who are interested in experiencing Iranian traditional lifestyle. The energy-efficient buildings and eco-friendly lighting are an attempt to promote environmental sustainability. The water for irrigation and drinking is provided by qanats (the sustainable old system of water supply). Moreover, drip irrigation system is used on the farm to save water and minimize evaporation. The rehabilitation of Dehzire Qanat has been one of the greatest achievements of Matinabad Eco- resort in making desertification process slower.

In addition, all staff has been trained in recycling waste and reducing garbage by: classifying different kinds of waste such as plastic, glass paper, organic waste; buying in bulk with minimal packaging; and minimizing use of paper, plastic, tin containers and suchlike. All the waste is exported out of the area.

Our guests are kindly requested and educated to manage their energy consumption to reduce oil/gas usage and carbon dioxide emission; accordingly, they are provided with a limited number of energy-efficient appliances.





[www.matinabad.com](http://www.matinabad.com)



Matinabad Desert Eco-Camp



Matinabad Desert Eco-Camp



Matinabad Desert Eco-Camp



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Matinabadecocamp



# MICE

S e r v i c e s



# EXPAND WITH SHARING

Today MICE Services presents opportunities for knowledge sharing, networking capacity building, intellectual development, and regional cooperation.

As an expert in the field of MICE industry, our team is responsible for planning events of all size throughout Iran. Formed with highly professional team who are dynamic, well-experienced and highly devoted. Our team will guarantee clients, satisfaction via offering great services.

Reliable and professional partners, state-of-the-art technology and high-quality services are the key factors in our success as a leader in MICE. With our cooperation with great venues and hotels in all major cities gives us the chance to offer clients the best location with the best rates available.

Iran Doostan MICE Department can plan functional, productive, and modern events. Registering for exhibitions by Iran international Exhibition Co., obtaining licenses and permissions are among our authorities.

We offer a wide range of luxury business travels and services such as access to exclusive events, business elite travel, epic sport events and high level security services.

## Iran Doostan Mice Services provides the following:

### EVENT MANAGEMENT

With our one-on-one consultations, event designers create and design for each of our clients using creativity, expertise and integrity. Our professional and experienced event team will work closely with you to stage an event that maximizes the achievement of your goals and epitomizes the messages and positioning that you seek to communicate.

Some of the offered services include:

- Stand Design
- Event Marketing
- Catering

### MEDIA

At Iran Doostan MICE Services through our partnership with the leading production companies, we offer variety of production services to our clients regarding different events,

services such as:

- Graphic Design
- Mobile Application
- Website
- Video production
- Corporate Gift
- Social Media

### TRAVEL

We offer a wide range of travel services such as having access to exclusive events and high level security services.

More services are:

- Visa
- Logistics
- Tours
- VIP
- Hotel
- Transportation

### BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

If you wish to expand your corporate presence in new destinations, set up new business and brand launches in locations where you do not have a physical presence. Iran Doostan MICE Service department has professional staff with many years of consulting, business match making, and extensive knowledge of local markets in the Middle East, Europe and Asia. Therefore, it can help businesses manage their Iran destination perfectly by offering

services such as:

- B2B arrangements
- Market Research
- Legal Services
- Licensing
- Office setup
- Staffing

### EXHIBITION

We pride ourselves on having flawless development, planning and operational management of exhibitions. The process for us starts with creating exhibitor guidelines, targeting the right exhibitors for a client's conference, and allocating stand spaces, while it ends with our clients' satisfaction.

The services include:

- Floor Planning
- Stand Design
- Lighting
- Booth Building
- Equipment Rental
- Exhibition sales
- Planning and onsite operation





# THIS IS THE HISTORY OF IRAN MICE SERVICES PARTNERS IN 2017:

**22-24 October 2017**



The 22nd annual congress of APBMT

**25-26 November 2017**



ITW international travel week Abu Dhabi

**15 May 2017**



Fine Art event about INTERPIPE conference in Espinas palace Hotel

**20-23 April 2017**



The 10th International & 15th National Congress on Quality Improvement in Clinical Laboratories

**23-26 May 2017**



AMB International exhibition for metal working

**Jan 31 - Feb 3, 2017**



AgroFarm-IsfahanVET

**12-13 March 2017**



Uzbekistan Football team conference and travel arrangement



On behalf of Euro Lloyd DFB Travel, we would like to let you know how much we appreciated the international friendly match in Tehran in October 2004. In addition to the German National team and the official delegation of the German Football Association (DFB), you had been entrusted with looking after the needs of a great number of DFB sponsors and supporters, as well as German media representatives. In terms of both planning and implementing the visit, you manage to meet all of our request, many of which the way our stay was handled efficiency, competently and always with a friendly smile. The great hospitality show by your Tehran staff contributed to making the trip a resounding success.

Michael Bechtloff  
Euro Lloyd Project Manager



As the organizer of COTTM -China Outbound Travel & Tourism Market, we are pleased to confirm our good cooperation with Iran Doostan MICE Services who have for many years successfully organized the Iran participation at COTTM as our agent in Iran.

Matt Thompson  
Event Director at Tarsus Co.



As organizer of Iran Argo-Food international Exhibitions and Iran Telecom we are pleased to confirm our good cooperation with Iran Doostan. Since many years they are responsible visa arrangements and hotel bookings for our staff and exhibitors.

Martin März  
Fairtrade's managing director



This was our first time launching a project in Tehran and we chose the delightful team at Iran Doostan MICE Services to assist our clients. The attention to detail of the team blew me away and the supports in the end become 24/7. They went beyond what was expected to ensure our event was a success and all our clients had a seamless stay in Tehran. I highly recommend the team to anyone planning to bring internationals into Iran.

Rachel Wilson  
Terrapinn events inspire and transform business



As the organizer of AMP Iran we had perfect experience with Iran Doostan MICE department. As our travel partner in Iran, because of their professional operation and high quality services, we had a very good experience. So, we would like to thank you for perfect services you have done.

Judith Ihle  
Project Manager at Landesmesse Stuttgart GmbH



As the biggest agent if Iran Oil Show in China, we started our cooperation with Iran Doostan MICE department since 2013. We still have a very good cooperation because of their professionalism. Therefore, we want to build up a long-term partnership.

Jessie Wang  
Council Director at Beijing International Exchange Association



# Medical Tourism

## Travel abroad for treatment

The special geographical location of Iran, its history of medical science, its expert medical and paramedical workforce, low costs, and high quality of its health services all increase the importance of medical tourism and medical fields in Iran.

"IDT Medical Tourism" department established in 1990 by a professional team of experienced medicine doctors and tourism industry experts.

IDT Medical Tourism mission is to provide world class and high quality treatment at affordable prices for the customers. We ensure that our patients will be treated by top doctors and surgery specialists who have international experience. In IDT Services Company, we provide other solutions such as recovery trip after or during the treatment.

### Medical Tourism Services

- Travel Services
- Hospitality
- Treatment
- Recovery
- Personalized multilingual patient representative
- Consulting

### IDT's Specialty in Medical Tourism

#### 1. Common Orthopedic Surgery

Total knee Arthroplasty  
Total hip Arthroplasty  
ACL  
Congenital deformities

#### 2. Cosmetic Surgery

Rhinoplasty  
GENEOPLASTY  
Liposaction  
Mamoplasty  
Abdominoplasty  
Mamopexy  
Blepharoplasty

#### 3. General Surgery for the Treatment of Obesity

Bypass  
Sleeve  
Banding  
Cholecystectomy

#### 4. Ophthalmology

Lasik surgery  
Lasek surgery  
Cataract surgery

#### 5. Dentistry

Implant  
Tooth Prosthetics

[www.iranhts.com](http://www.iranhts.com)



# WORLD NET HOTELS

wnh-ir.net

**W**orld Net Hotels is the leading hotel booking wholesaler specializing in quality hotel accommodation at discounted rates. We offer in excess of 90,000 hotels in almost 80 countries in both cities and coastal resorts. We offer a full range of properties, including convenient airport hotels, 2 and 3 star budget hotel rooms, 4 and 5 star luxury hotel accommodation.

We provide a wide range of services includes FIT Hotel bookings, Transfers, Excursions & sightseeing, ground handling, group handling, VIP clients.

Our sophisticated, user friendly online system ensures efficiency, pioneer use of the latest technology.

World Net Hotels Current operating offices : Lebanon - Switzerland - Turkey - Greece - Tunisia - Thailand - Malaysia - Indonesia - Armenia - Libya - Algeria - Syria - Iran - Iraq



# IDT

## Digital Marketing Department

The main goal for IDT Digital Marketing team is to make Iran Doostan Tours Co. website one of Iran's first online tourism platforms, cultural website, and information directory. Promoting Iran and its unmatched nature, historical sites, cultural aspects, and hospitable people to the world, creating an Iran-information-bank, and introducing it as a top tourist destination are all our top missions.

Our vision was to aid the tourism industry by informing and accommodating all different categories of travelers from holidaymakers to business elites and offering them a smooth, fulfilling experience of Iran.

### Our strategies

Our digital marketing strategies are focused on Social Media, Content Marketing, Online PR, Website, Website Optimization, SEO, Email Marketing, Market Research, and Travel Magazine to promote Iran in the best way.

# Social Media



IranDoostanTours



IranDoostanTours



IranDoostan\_En



TourstoIran



IranDoostanTours



IranDoostanTours



IranDoostanTours





## Iran Doostan Tours

established a new transportation department in 2016 to provide VIP transportation for dear guests traveling in Iran and to offer them a world class experience at every moment during their trip.





Iran Doostan Tours Co. the outstanding Iranian Tour Operator  
awarded by the Iranian First Vice-President Es'haq Jahangiri in 2017



Awarded as the best tour operator in Iran by the Iranian First Vice-President  
Es'haq Jahangiri and Foreign Minister Dr. MJ. Zarif in 2015.

# See You in IRAN



سفر تا رخسود خانه  
بسیار باید زیاده

***“Much travel is needed to ripen a man’s rawness”***

Saadi Shirazi  
Iranian poet.



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