



Cultural
Heritage,
Handicrafts
& Tourism
Organization
of Iran

10 REASONS

Why You Should Visit

IRAN



شہید چمران - جنوب
Shahid Chamran Exp. - South
Milad Exp. - South

شہید نواب
میرزا امام شکر علی
Milad Exp. - North
Miri Khomeini Airport

شہید چمران - شمال
اویں - ولنجک
Chamran Exp. - North
8th - Velenjak

1. UNIQUE ANCIENT & HISTORICAL SITES

“7000 Years of History & Civilization!”

Iran is home to one of the world’s oldest living civilizations, with historical and urban settlements dating back to 7000 BC. The southwestern and western part of the Iranian Plateau contributed to the traditional Ancient Near East with the Elamite Civilization, from the Early Bronze Age, and later with various other peoples’, such as the Kassites, Mannaeans and Gutians. Hegel once named the Persians as the first Historical People. The Medes unified Iran as a nation and empire in 625 BC. The Achaemenid Empire (550–330 BC), founded by Cyrus the Great, was the first of the Persian empires to rule from the Balkans to North Africa and also Central Asia, spanning three continents, from their seat of power in Persis (Persepolis). It was the largest empire up to that time, and the first world empire, spanning 5.5 million square kilometers, larger than any previous empire in history. Iran has also endured invasions by the Greeks, Arabs, Turks and Mongols. Nevertheless, it has continually reasserted its national identity throughout the centuries and has developed as a distinct political and cultural entity. Iran was reunified as an independent state in 1501 by the Safavid Dynasty, which converted Iran to Shia Islam as the official religion of their empire, marking one of the most important turning points in the history of Iran and also Islam.



When it comes to UNESCO-registered World Heritage Sites, Iran can boast an impressive 23 registered cultural sites. Palaces, bazaars, places of worship, ancient water systems, and remnants of the great Persian Empire dominate this list. There are a variety of tourist attractions and ancient and historical sites in Iran, such as:

Persepolis (locally known as Takht-e Jamshid): Persepolis was the ceremonial capital of the Achaemenid Empire. The site was chosen and constructed under Cyrus the Great, Darius I, and King Xerxes. What remains of this pinnacle of Persian Civilization are massive columns and former palaces, innumerable reliefs depicting people of various nationalities that once walked through there.

Bam and its Cultural Landscape (Arg-e Bam): An overview of Bam immediately gives visitors the impression of being in a life-sized sand castle. The most recognized monument, Arg-e Bam, dates back over 2,000 years to the Parthian Empire.

Shahr-e Sukhteh (Burnt City): Or the Burnt City, is an archaeological site of a sizable Bronze Age urban settlement, associated with the Jiroft Culture. The reasons for the unexpected rise and fall of the Burnt City are still wrapped in mystery.

Tepe (Hill) Sialk Ziggurat: is a large ancient archeological site in a suburb of the city of Kashan, Isfahan Province, in central Iran. According to a joint study between Iran's Cultural Heritage Organization, the "Louvre", and the "Institut Francais de Recherche en Iran," the oldest settlements in Sialk date back to 5500–6000 BC.



2. INCREDIBLE ARCHITECTURE



“Visit the Fundamentals of all Architectural Styles in the World”

British traveler, art critic, and author, Robert Byron:

“Rank Esfahan among those rare places, like Athens or Rome, which are the common refreshment of humanity”.

Persian architecture is the architecture of Iran and parts of the rest of West Asia, the Caucasus and Central Asia. Its history dates back to at least 5,000 BCE with characteristic examples distributed over a vast area from Turkey and Iraq to Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, and from the Caucasus to Zanzibar. Persian buildings vary from peasant huts to teahouses and gardens, from pavilions to “some of the most majestic structures the world has ever seen”. In addition to historical gates, palaces and mosques, the rapid growth of cities, such as the capital, Tehran, has brought about a wave of demolition and new construction. Iranian architecture features a great variety, both structurally and aesthetically, deriving from a variety of traditions and experiences. Without sudden innovations, and despite the repeated trauma of invasions and cultural shocks, it has achieved “an individuality distinct from that of other Muslim countries”.



Historian and Archaeologist Arthur Pope:

“The supreme Iranian art, in the proper meaning of the word, has always been its architecture”

The supremacy of Iranian architecture applies to both pre- and post-Islamic periods. Overall, the traditional Iranian architecture throughout the ages can be categorized into the following styles:

The Zoroastrian Style is found in monuments Such as the Chogha Zanbil temple (Ziggurat).

The Achaemenid Style is exemplified by Persepolis, Susa, Ecbatana, Tomb of Cyrus the Great.

The Parthian Style (Includes Seleucid, Parthian and Sassanid eras).

The Khorasani Style is exemplified by the Jameh Mosque of Naien and the Jameh Mosque of Isfahan.

The Razi Style has influenced the methods and designs used in subsequent eras.

The Azari Style is to be found in monuments such as the Dome of Soltaniyeh, Arg-e Alishah, the Jameh Mosque of Varamin, and the Goharshad Mosque in Mashhad.

The Isfahani Style was prevalent throughout the Safavid, Afsharid, Zand and Qajarid eras. Examples include Chehelsotoon and Ali Qapu.

3.RICH MUSEUMS

*“The Land of Golden Rhytons, Glorious Cups
and Civilized Statues”*



Museums

Boasting one of the world's most ancient civilizations, Iran has numerous museums that offer a rich insight into thousands of years of national art and culture.

The National Museum of Iran

With more than 70 years of activity, The National Museum of Iran contains 300,000 museum objects in an area of more than 20,000 square meters. In addition to being the country's largest museum of History and Archaeology, it ranks as one of the world's most prestigious museums in terms of grandeur, scale, diversity and quality of its huge monuments. Here are some of the best, most-visited museums in Iran: the Reza Abassi Museum, the Iran Cinema Museum, the Glassware and Ceramic Museum, the National Jewelry Museum, the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art (TMOCA), the National Museum of Iran, the Shiraz Pars Museum and the Iran Carpet Museum.



4. THE LOWEST TOURISM COST IN THE WORLD

“The Highest Gains with the Lowest Costs”



For the third time, Iran has been chosen in the latest Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report, published by the World Economic Forum (WEF), as the most affordable foreign tourist destination. The biennial report surveys 136 countries in 14 categories, indicating their performance in delivering sustainable economic and social benefits through their tourism sector. The report states that in terms of price competitiveness, Iran is ranked above tourism industry heavyweights such as Egypt, Malaysia, Russia, Turkey, Greece, Spain, the US, France and Italy. It indicates how costly it is to travel or invest in countries. Costs relating to travel, such as ticket prices, fuel rates, and taxes, as well as ground costs, including accommodation and food prices, are the indicators for “price competitiveness”. Iran Price competitiveness rating is 6.66, placing it first in the world.



5. HOSPITALITY AND AFFECTIONATE PEOPLE





“Experience the real sense of hospitality which you’d never experience elsewhere”

American chef, author, and television personality, Anthony Bourdain:

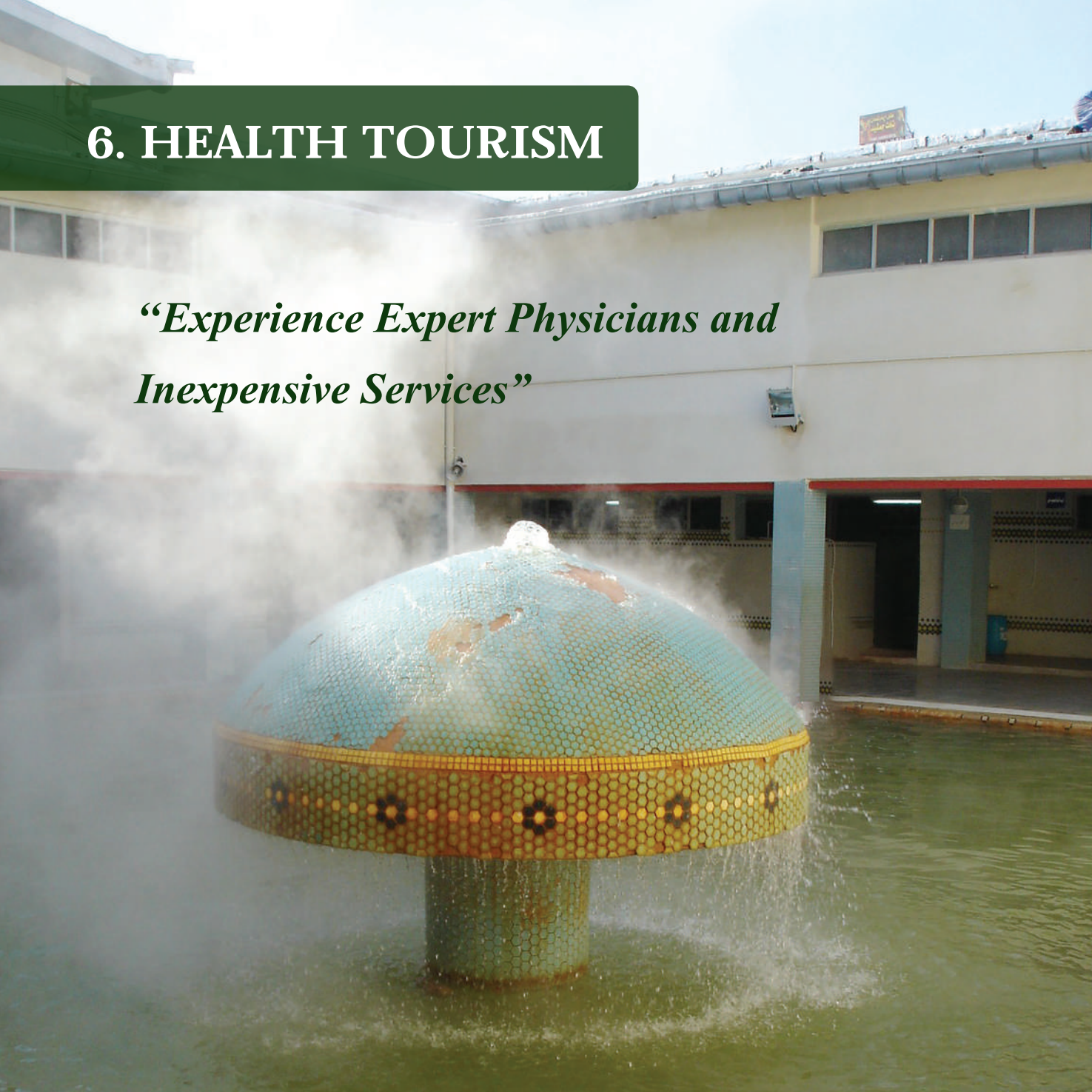
“It wasn’t supposed to be like this — of all the places, of all the countries, all the years of traveling, it’s here, in Iran, that I am greeted most warmly by total strangers.”

If anything, all that Iranians can be accused of is excessive hospitality. So, when traveling to Iran, beware of innocent looking situations, which could turn into one of your life experiences. Kind of walking into The Twilight Zone. The Iranians are of such an affable nature as to warm your heart and make your travel more off beat.

Jouber (A French Traveler) says: “Our hosts (Iranians) did not neglect us even for a minute during meals. The food was simply fantastic, and they were very attentive even to the guests’ smallest needs. The servants also had the utmost care in catering to our needs.”

6. HEALTH TOURISM

*“Experience Expert Physicians and
Inexpensive Services”*



Iran offers a wide range of treatment facilities through an extensive network of highly equipped hospitals (around 850 hospitals), and rehabilitation centers with reasonable costs. A costs analysis procedure shows that treatment costs in Iran are much lower in comparison to developed countries. Iran is also very cost-competitive in comparison to its regional competitors such as Jordan, Turkey, the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, as well as Southeast Asian countries such as Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, the Philippines and India. In 2012, 30,000 people traveled to Iran to receive medical treatment.

Between 150,000 and 200,000 health tourists are estimated to have traveled to Iran in 2015, and this figure is expected to rise to 500,000 in subsequent years.

Spas

Iran has some of the most important hot spring spa centers of the world, attracting millions of visitors each year. The spas are famous for their therapeutic value. The most important Iranian spas include:

Mt. Damavand Thermal Springs and Public SPA

Damavand has some thermal springs with therapeutic qualities. These mineral hot spring are mainly located on the volcano's flanks and at the base, giving evidence of volcanic heat comparatively near the surface of the earth. The main Damavand Hot Spring is Larijan Thermal Springs or Abe Garm-e Larijan.

Sar Ein Spas

Sar Ein or Sar Ghein village, a district of Irdimoosi village, is located west of the city of Ardabil nearby the town itself (6 kilometers from the Ardabil - Tabriz road). They include Gavmish Goli (buffalo pool), Ghara Sue (black water), Sari Sue hot spa (yellow water), Gazal hot water spring, and Ab Cheshmeh.

There are other spas in other Iranian cities as well.



7. IRANIAN HANDICRAFTS AND HANDMADE ART





“Art of Our Hands Will Shine in Your Eyes”

Iran has been a center of civilization for at least 7000 years, in Arts and Crafts. Iranian Art has one of the richest art heritages in world history. It encompasses many subfields, such as the following:

Calico (Ghalamkar), a type of Textile Printing; Gerehchini, like what is seen in the Nasir al-Mulk Mosque diorama, where frames of wood and panels of glass are set next to each other in mostly geometrical designs; Local musical instruments (Tar & Setar); Silverwork, for making many objects out of silver (these include trays, candle holders, fruit dishes, cups and other decorative objects); Woodcarving (like wood working on tables and furniture); Engraving (Ghalamzani), which is a science, art, hobby, industry and trade; Inlaid work or Khatamkari, as one of the Iranian forms of marquetry wherein the surface of wooden or metallic articles is decorated with pieces of wood, bone and metal cut in a variety of shapes and designs; Miniature, a small painting, whether a book illustration or a separate work of art intended to be kept in an album of such works, tiling, stone carving, brickwork, stuccos and tile panels.



8. IRAN'S ECOTOURISM POTENTIALS



“Charming Nature: The Land of Red Springs, Green Summers, Yellow Falls and White Winters”

Today, Ecotourism has transformed into a new trend in the tourism industry. Iran is a country with a dazzling variety of natural attractions, including mountains, lakes, caves, forests, rare plant and animal species, mineral waters and numerous islands on its southern and northern beaches. All of these attractions have made Iran a favorite destination for sightseers. Swimming and water skiing are certainly exciting experiences not to be easily forgotten. Iran’s fauna includes some rare species, such as the Siberian Kingfisher, falcons, eagles, pelicans, etc. It also features such Mammals as the Persian Fallow Deer, Wild Cheetahs, the Asiatic Black Bear, the Persian Gazelle, and Zebras. The blue whale is a marine mammal inhabiting the Persian Gulf, the country’s largest marine habitat.

Considered as one of the world’s top five countries in terms of biodiversity, Iran is home to 519 bird species, 172 mammal species, 199 reptile species, 20 species of amphibians, 173 species of fish and 9,000 distinctive plant species. There are also 9 biosphere storages, 50 interior lakes, 548,000 km of coastal lines in the north and south, including numerous islands, 23 national parks, 35 wildlife refuges and 111 protected zones. Popular ecotourism attractions in Iran include mountain and desert treks, bird watching in coastal areas and wetlands, and diving. There are a number of natural parks and protected zones, such as the Golestan National Forest, Dasht-e Kavir, Lar, Khosh Yellagh, the Bakhtegan Lake and the Bamoo Mountain, which offer ecotourism attractions. Some of Iran’s Ecotourism capacities include the following:

The Golestan Forest (national Park), Gorgan, Dasht-e Kavir (National Park, The Dizin Ski Resort, Mountaineering and Mountain Climbing, Rock Climbing, Rafting, Scuba Diving, Trekking, Dessert Safari, and The Caspian Coast.



9. IRANIAN FOOD



“Tasty Foods Enshrined in the Aura of History”

There are over 400 different kinds of food and sweets in Iran. The ingredients are generally cereals, grains, vegetables and proteins. The existence of various ethnic groups in Iran, alongside its rich culture, has made Iranian Cuisine highly diversified. Some of the most popular Iranian foods include, AabGousht (Dizi), Fesenjan (Pomegranate Walnut Stew), Bademjan (Eggplant and Tomato Stew), Baghali Polo (Rice with Dill and Fava Beans), Zereshk Polo (Rice with Barberry), Ghorme Sabzi (vegetable stew), Ash-e Reshteh (noodle and bean soup), Tahdig (Crunchy Fried Rice), Morassa Polo (Rice decorated with nuts and dried fruit), and Kebab (Barbecue, Lamb, Chicken, Lamb Liver, Ground Meat).

Both hot and cold drinks are also common in Iran. Cold drinks include Sekanjebin and various types of fragrant liquids such as rose water. Warm drinks include coffee, black tea, green tea and herbal tea (tisane). Black tea is more popular in Iran, even during summer times.

Local desserts include, Ranginak, Faloodeh Shirazi, Ghotab, Pashmak, Loze nârgil, Sohan, and Gaz.

10. VISIT A LAND OF FOUR SEASONS

“Iran: A World inside a Country”

Iran is one of the few countries with four distinct seasons each year. Travelling to Iran in different seasons means encountering distinctive and divergent scenes and adventures. In summertime, the weather can be cold in some parts of the north while warm or scorching hot in others. In wintertime, major parts of the country can be blanketed in snow while others in the south and southeast hot and humid.

The North is covered with Evergreen Forests and borders a Grand Lake (Caspian Sea) supporting a moderate climate. The South is bounded by the Persian Gulf, with a hot and humid climate, dotted with enchanting and glamorous Palm Forests which calm the mind and feed the soul. The East runs through hot desert regions and a multitude of colored sand with sky nights filled with stars, versus the West, a vast land chained together with some of the highest mountains anywhere to the west of itself.

In other words, Iran enjoys the characteristics of all the seasons as the Western Iranian Plateau (Iran) straddles the crossroads of a number of geo-climatic zones. The rather large territory of the country, with great differences in altitude, is also contributory to the variation in climate and vegetation. Iran truly is a land of wonder, paradox and diversity, hence the title, *“Iran: a World inside a Country”*.





Cultural
Heritage,
Handicrafts
& Tourism
Organization
of **Iran**

