

IRAN TRAVEL ADVISOR

Iran Travel Advisor includes simple and easy-to-understand tips that each tourist traveling to Iran should know. Iran Travel Advisor will be translated into different languages and will be officially published on www.travelT.ir with approval from Iran Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization. Iran or Persia with more than 7 thousand years of history is the birthplace of the first major world empire, the Achaemenids. Currently, Iran is a country with 77 million population and 1.648 million km² area. Iran is located in Middle East, West Asia, and borders Caspian Sea in the North and Persian Gulf in the South. Mountains in the West and North, deserts in the center, forests in the North and coasts in the South and North are main topographical features of Iran.

[1] Climate

Iran enjoys diverse climates and is one of the few countries that have all four distinguished seasons. At any time of the year, in each side of the country, you can enjoy one of the four seasons. Iran is dry and hot in the south, cold in the west and east, and mild in the north. It is said that the hottest spot on earth is the Lut Desert. Visit "www.irimo.ir/eng/index.php" to check out Iran's weather forecast for the next 24 hours. High season for tourism

in Iran consists of two periods of time: 1) from the beginning of March to the end of May, and 2) from the beginning of September to the end of November. The best time to visit south of Iran (such as the Persian Gulf and other coastal regions) is during January and February.

[2] Political System

Political system of Iran is the Islamic Republic. The supreme leader is the highest ranking political and religious authority. The President is the head of state elected by nationwide suffrage for four-year terms and the parliament members are popularly elected for four years. The Judiciary branch is independent. Cities are administered by mayors that are elected by city councils.

[3] Religion

Islam is the state religion and to which more than 98 percent of population belong. The remaining 2% are non-Muslim religious minorities, including Christians, Jews and Zoroastrians who can practice their rituals in their particular places of worship.

[4] Language

Farsi or Persian is the official language of Iran. Ethnic groups including Persians, Azeris, Kurds, Lurs, Balochis, Arabs, Turkmen and others speak their own languages and lead a peaceful coexistent life. Many educated Iranians speak English as well.

[5] Money

Official unit of Iranian currency is Iranian Rial (IR) but “Toman” is commonly used in everyday transactions and conversations. 10 Rials is equal to 1 Toman (10 IR=1 Toman). Paying in Dollar and Euro is not uncommon and there are no restrictions with respect to the amount of foreign currency entering the country. However, if the amount exceeds 10,000 dollars, submitting a financial statement to the bank authorities on the entry points is required. According to I.R. Iran Constitution, exporting an amount exceeding 10,000 dollars (or its equivalent in other currencies) is forbidden unless a financial statement is submitted.

[6] Banking Services and Credit Cards

ATMs and debit cards abound in Iran, but currently international credit and debit cards are not accepted. For exchange, remittance and currency conversion try banks and exchange shops (Sarafi). Recently, converting up to 5000 dollars or Euros into Iranian Rial via bank card in banking branches located in the major airports of Iran and in the vicinity of tourist hubs has become possible. Upon departure, you can reconvert your balance into dollar or Euro. To get updated with the latest information on using international credit cards in Iran, visit “www.TravelIT.ir”.

[7] Insurance

All foreign nationals, upon arrival, must have insurance or be provided with medical insurance which is mandatory; hence, in the absence of insurance, refer to travel companies or insurance offices at the entry points.

[8] Working Hours and Holidays

In Tehran, government offices are closed on Thursdays and Fridays. During the week, working hours are from 8:00-16:00; except for banks and “Police Offices of Foreign Aliens” which are open from 8:00-14:00. In other cities, working hours are 8:00-14:00. On Thursdays, banks and other government offices are open till 12:00. Holidays can be categorized into National and Religious. Tables (1) and (2) depict Iran holiday types, date and occasion (name), respectively.

Table 1- National Holidays

	Holiday Name	Date
1	Iranian New Year (Nowruz)	March 21-24
2	Islamic Republic Day	April 01
3	Nature Day	April 02
4	Anniversary of Imam Khomeini Demise	June 04
5	Revolt of 15 Khordad	June 05
6	Revolution Day	February 11
7	Oil Nationalization Day	March 19

Religious holidays are based on Islamic lunar calendar. The Lunar calendar is 10 days shorter than the solar calendar (Iran official calendar); as a result, date of religious holidays change every year in Iran’s official calendar.

Table 2- Religious Holidays (year 2017)*

	Holiday Name	Hijri	Date
1	Martyrdom of Fatima	Jumada al-Thani 03	March 02
2	Birthday of Imam Ali	Rajab 13	April 10
3	Prophet’s Muhammad Ascension	Rajab 27	April 21
4	Imam Mahdi’s Birthday	Sha’ban 15	May 11
5	Martyrdom of Imam Ali	Ramadan 21	June 16
6	Eid-e-Fetr (End of Ramadan)	Shawwal 01	June 25
7	Martyrdom of Imam Sadeq	Shawwal 25	July 19
8	Eid-e-Ghorban (Feast of Sacrifice)	Zul Qida 10	September 01
9	Eid-al-Ghadir	Zul Qida 18	September 09
10	Tassoua	Muharram 09	September 29
11	Ashura	Muharram 10	September 30
12	Arbaeen	Safar 20	November 09
13	Demise of Prophet Muhammad and Martyrdom of Imam Hassan Mojtaba	Safar 28	November 17
14	Martyrdom of Imam Reza	Safar 30	November 18
15	Birthday of Prophet Muhammad and Imam Sadeq	Rabi’ul Awal 17	December 05

* The Dates in the above table is only valid for 2017

[9] Time Difference

Time difference of Iran is +3:30 GMT. Daylight saving time is a common practice in Iran. When local standard time is about to reach 00:00:00 on March 21, clocks turned forward one hour and on September 22, 00:00:00, clocks are turned backwards one hour. So, from March 21 to September 22, local time in Iran is +4:30 GMT.

[10] Iran Tourist Attractions

Due to its geographical location, diverse climate zones, long history and ancient civilization, Iran enjoys numerous religious, cultural, historical, archeological and natural appeals. It has twenty world cultural heritage sites inscribed on the UNESCO list such as Persepolis (Shiraz), Naqsh-e Jahan Square (Isfahan), Bistoun inscription (Kermanshah), and Armenian Monastic Ensembles (Northwest Iran) and one world natural heritage site which is the Lut. Desert Wondrous monuments and archeological remains from 3rd millennium B.C., grand architecture, paradisiac Persian gardens, and a wide range of intangible heritage are among Iran's attractions.

[11] Iranian Way

Iranians are exceptionally hospitable and they welcome their foreign guests with open arms and smiling faces. This hospitality originates with Iran's rich culture. Iranians have a unique custom, "Tarof", which is

often puzzling for foreign tourists. For example, when you are paying for something (e.g. in a shop) you ask "How much is it?" The shopkeeper replies "ghabelinadare" which means, don't worry about it. This statement does not mean you don't have to pay for your purchase; rather it represents respect and polity.

[12] Tourist Guides

Group tours are operated under Iran National Tourism Organization (Iran Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization) license. Normally, a licensed tourist guide with foreign language skills will be escorting such tours. Individual tourists or FITs can ask for on-site interpretation in most cultural-historical attractions as well as museums.

[13] Nature-based Tourism

All Nature-based and eco tours are organized and operated with written permission from Iran Environmental Protection Organization (IEPO). Tourists are forbidden to carry hunting apparatus and to import/export biodiversity components. Hunting enthusiasts should acquire hunting permits via an incoming tour operator licensed by IEPO.

[14] Transportation

Iran is accessible via air, sea and ground. In recent years, the transportation network in Iran has wit-

nessed significant developments. Major cities such as Tehran, Shiraz, Isfahan, Mashhad, and Tabriz enjoy subways, railways, and international airports.

Air

Issuing visa upon arrival in major international airports has made air transport the most convenient option to enter Iran. 20 domestic airlines and 100 airports serve passengers.

Railway

Railway networks connect almost all important cities in Iran such as Tehran, Mashhad, Tabriz, Isfahan, Shiraz and Kerman; therefore, it can be a suitable means of transport in Iran. VIP trains shuttle regularly on major routes. To book train ticket from RAJA Train Company System, travelers should use travel agencies or visit "ticket2.raja.ir".

Ground

It is the most common and the cheapest means of inter-city transport in Iran. Most tourists enter Iran via border entry points and move around the country by coaches and sedans.

[15] Car Rental and Using Personal Vehicle

It is possible to rent a car with or without a driver. To rent a car, without a driver, you must have a valid international driving license. Now, it is also an option to travel to Iran with personal vehicles. Read # 26 to learn about customs regulations.

[16] Accommodation

Hotels can be booked through an online reservation system or travel agencies. Foreign tourists can stay in lodges (public or private) licensed by Iran National Tourism Organization. Tourists are allowed to change their place of accommodation during their stay but, to do so, they must inform police. Staying with locals, without permission, via websites like Couchsurfing is forbidden.

[17] Food and Beverage

Persian cuisine is rich in diversity. Different types of Kebab, khoresh (stew) and other local foods are served in restaurants in almost all cities. Keep in mind; you must not miss various types of appetizers, salads and desserts such as Ash (thick soup or stew) and Torshi (pickled vegetables) served alongside main dishes. Water is purified in Iran and tap water is safe to drink. Nevertheless, bottled water is widely available. Tea, as a hot drink, and dough (watery yogurt mixed with herbs), as cold drink, have become a staple in the Iranian diet. Vegetarians are recommended to notify their tour guide in advance to make the necessary arrangements. According to law of I.R.Iran, production, sale, purchase, transport and distribution of alcoholic beverages, narcotic and psychedelic drugs and pork meat is forbidden.

[18] Shopping

Traditional shopping centers in Iran are called bazaar. Well-known bazaars in Iran include Tabriz Grand Bazaar (a world heritage site), Vakil Bazaar in Shiraz and Tehran Grand Bazaar. In addition to bazaars, there are various and numerous modern shopping malls across the country. Iran is also rich in terms of handicrafts and souvenirs. These items can be found in shopping centers of each city.

[19] Health and Sanitation

Squat toilets are common in Iran; But most restaurants, hotels and other types of accommodations have a choice of thrones. All toilets are equipped with hose and purified water. Toilet paper is available in restaurants and hotel toilets, but some public toilets on intercity highways are without toilet paper.

[20] Security and Safety

No area in Iran is declared potentially high risk for tourism apart from border cities neighboring Afghanistan and Iraq. There are no security and health restrictions to travel to different regions.

[21] Information and Communications

Iran country code is 0098. Acquiring cheap SIM cards is easy and simple. The majority of public venues and accommodations provide Wi-Fi internet connections.

GPRS and 4G mobile technologies are available as well. Almost all traffic and tourist signs are bilingual, Persian and English.

[22] Tourism SIM Card

Having filled out a request form, tourists can obtain these SIM cards from all stalls in entry points. Besides voice calls and SMS, tourists can utilize GPRS and 4G with low tariffs.

[23] Passport

To get an Iranian visa, your passport should have a validity of at least 6 months. Keep your passport separate from other personal belongings and always have a copy of your passport in case of any potential problems. If your passport happens to get lost, please inform police.

[24] Tourist Visa

To get an Iranian tourist visa there are two options:
1) Deliver your essential documents such as passport, photo and visa application form to an Iranian embassy or consulate in origin countries
2) Upon arrival: get arrival visa at the airports of Imam Khomeini, Mehrabad, Kish, Qeshm, Boushehr, Shiraz, Tabriz, Isfahan, Mashhad and Chabahar. Validity period of this type of visa is 30 days.

[25] Visa Extension

Visa can be extended in the Bureau for Aliens and Foreign Immigrants Affairs. You should try to renew your visa at least four days before the expiry date of your initial visa. Upon arrival you can only extend your visa in Tehran Bureau for Aliens and Foreign Immigrants Affairs.

[26] Customs Regulations

According to Iranian customs regulations, import of personal jewelries (up to 150 grams), medicine (for personal usage and at low volume), dogs (or other domestic animals) with IDs, airport quarantine permit and animal cart are allowed. Import and export of alcoholic drinks and pork are forbidden. Export of up to 20m² hand-woven carpets (Pilgrims with destination of holy places and shrines like Iraq, Syria and Saudi Arabia are not allowed to bring carpets out of the country), jewelries (gold, silver and platinum) up to 150 grams, Saffron up to 100 grams is allowed.

Any attempts to export antiques, original art works, handwritten books and printed stones, calligraphies, miniature paintings, precious coins and all kinds of historical objects and cultural heritage is forbidden and is deemed as trafficking. The offender, in addition to the return of property, will be condemned to 1 to 3 years of imprisonment and a fine equivalent to twice the price of trafficked property. Moreover, import and export of

biodiversity components, export of fossil remains without permission from Iran Environmental Protection Organization is forbidden. For further information, visit "<http://www.irica.gov.ir/Portal/Home>".

[27] Ownership

Those without permanent residence who plan to have regular seasonal trips for several and consecutive years for the purposes of leisure and recreation in the countryside are allowed to buy properties as personal residence (in compliance with requirements). This can be carried out through Iranian diplomatic and consular representatives abroad and the governor office of the property location.

[28] Voltage and Adaptor

In Iran the standard voltage is 220 V and the standard frequency is 50 Hz. Common electric outlets are type C and F, the same as European models.

[29] Photography and Filming

Photography and filming military facilities and other places with the sign "no photo" is forbidden.

[30] Dressing Code

It is essential for women to cover their hair and body in public places, called hijab. Minimum hijab allowed for women includes full pants, long sleeved shirt over

pants (also known as manteau) and a scarf to cover the head. Manteaux are normally cheap with a variety of colors and designs available. Women, upon arrival or departure from their place of residence in Iran, must wear their manteau and scarf. It is forbidden for men to wear shorts in public places. Wearing ties, though not common, is not forbidden. According to Islamic Shariah rules, physical contact, such as shaking hands with the opposite sex is not allowed. Also sexual relations outside marriage are forbidden and punishable.

[31] Running into a Problem during Visit

In case of any problems (stolen property, missing mobile phone, etc.), immediately inform your tour guide and the nearest police station. If it's lost or stolen travel documents, after carrying out the necessary follow-up by the police and the travel agency, you can inform representatives of your country in Iran.

[32] Iran Tourism Portal

To find a comprehensive list of tourist attractions and useful information about traveling to Iran, visit "<http://tourismiran.ir>". In addition, website links and necessary phone numbers of government offices and embassies of your country can also be found on this portal.

2017

Note: the above laws, regulations and website addresses are subject to change. To get updates and further information visit "www.TravelT.ir".

Table 3: Important Phone Numbers

110	Police
115	Medical Emergency(SOS)
118	24-Hours Telephone Service
125	Fire
09620	Tourist Information Center
141	Road Traffic Information
021-1549	Railway Information Center
021-1539	RAJA Train Ticket Booking System
112	Rescue Service
133	Taxi Service
09633	Imam Khomeini Airport Flight Information
1833	Imam Khomeini Airport Taxi Service
199	Mehrabad Airport Flight Information
021-61151	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
021-8880000	Iranian Immigration and Passport Police Office

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www.Tourismiran.ir

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