



Persian Gulf خلیج فارس

Includes ➔

Kish Island	214
Bandar-e Lengeh	219
Bandar Abbas	219
Qeshm Island	222
Hormoz Island	227

Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Bandar (p221)
- ➔ Fanoos (p220)
- ➔ Kolbeh Darvish (p217)
- ➔ Mir Mohanna (p218)
- ➔ Shabhaye Talai – Golden Nights Beach Restaurant (p226)
- ➔ Kaleng (p226)

Best Places to Sleep

- ➔ Atilar Hotel (p220)
- ➔ Mr Amini's House (p225)
- ➔ Mrs Fattahi's House (p225)
- ➔ Toranj Marine Hotel (p217)
- ➔ Ecotourism Hotel (p219)

Why Go?

Quick – turn around: there's an entire travel experience that you probably haven't even considered. While you've been planning your Iranian sojourn around the jewels of the country's rich history (Esfahan, Shiraz, Yazd), to the southeast the Persian Gulf is equally deserving. Explore the magnetic islands of Kish, Qeshm and Hormoz, which are absurdly easy to combine and are altogether different. While Kish is unashamedly glam and glitzy, Qeshm and Hormoz are refreshingly void of large-scale development and offer a chance to glimpse a more traditional way of life – not to mention an array of geological wonders. Along the coast, soak up the vibes of lively Bandar Abbas and make a beeline for the delightful town of Kong, whose historical centre is peppered with charming old houses and monuments. Thus, you'll have the full monty.

When to Go

The gulf is hotter than Hades between April and November, with temperatures averaging 35°C and occasionally climbing as high as 50°C. Not surprisingly, life adjusts accordingly – most businesses start early and then shut up shop from about noon to 5pm.

During No Ruz (Iranian New Year; 21 March to 3 April) the entire coast is inundated by swarms of domestic tourists and most hotels are full – avoid travelling here at this time. Try to visit during winter, when the temperature averages between 18°C and 25°C, humidity is relatively low and crowds are nonexistent.

Kish Island

📍 076 / POPULATION 27,000

Welcome to Iran's Sunshine Coast, or Iran's Costa del Sol. However you label it, say hello to this attractive island that, since the 1970s, has become a beach resort where visitors can swim, shop and sample a laid-back and relatively liberated local lifestyle. Iran's most hedonistic spot, Kish is booming. Hotels, apartment blocks and retail complexes (it enjoys free-trade-zone status) dominate the once-empty desert landscape and domestic tourist numbers are on the rise, especially in winter, when it's freezing cold on the mainland. Kish is largely ignored by foreign tourists, though. That's a shame, because a visit here is a great way to experience Iran from an altogether different perspective. Leave the sight-laden cities of the mainland and come here to enjoy sea, sand and sun in a relaxed atmosphere.

جزیره کیش

History

Kish Island is first recorded in the memoirs of Nearchus, the Greek sailor commissioned by Alexander the Great to explore the Persian Gulf in 325 BC. In the Middle Ages Kish became an important trading centre under its own powerful Arab dynasty and at one time supported a population of 40,000. The main town was Harireh, which is believed to be the town referred to by the poet Sa'di in his famous work *Golestan* (Rose Garden).

Kish was known for the quality of its pearls; when Marco Polo was visiting the imperial court in China, he remarked on the beauty of the pearls worn by one of the emperor's wives and was told they had come from Kish. In the 14th century Kish fell into decline and it remained obscure until the 1970s, when it was developed as a semi-private retreat for the shah and his guests – complete with international airport, luxury hotels and a casino.



Persian Gulf Highlights

- 1 Bandar Abbas** (p219) Soaking up local vibes while wandering through the animated streets of this city and visiting its fish market.
- 2 Kong** (p219) Immersing yourself in a traditional port town blessed with plenty

of historical buildings and houses.

- 3 Harireh** (p215; Kish Island) Exploring this splendid old city that comprises the remains of a large house and an old port.

- 4 Chahkooch Canyon** (p224) Marvelling at this sculptural canyon, one of many geological wonders on Qeshm Island.
- 5 Rainbow Valley** (p227) Wandering in a Martian landscape on Hormoz Island.