

Welcome to Iran

Welcome to what could be the friendliest country on earth. Iran is the jewel in Islam's crown, combining glorious architecture with a warm-hearted welcome.

In the Footsteps of Empire

Echoes of ancient civilisations resonate down through the ages in Iran. Some of history's biggest names - Cyrus and Darius, Alexander the Great, Genghis Khan - all left their mark here and the cities they conquered or over which they ruled are among the finest in a region rich with such storied ruins. Walking around the awesome and beautiful ancient capital at Persepolis, experiencing the remote power of Susa (Shush), and taking in the wonderfully immense Elamite ziggurat at Choga Zanbil will carry you all the way back to the glory days of Ancient Persia.

The Beauty of Islam

Iran is a treasure house for some of the most beautiful Islamic architecture on the planet. The sublime, turquoise-tiled domes and minarets of Esfahan's Naqsh-e Jahan (Imam) Square gets so many appreciative gasps of wonder, and rightly so, but there are utterly magnificent rivals elsewhere, in Yazd and Shiraz among others. And it's not just the mosques - the palaces (especially in Tehran), gardens (everywhere, but Kashan really shines) and artfully conceived bridges and other public buildings all lend grace and beauty to cities across the country

Modern & Sophisticated

This is your chance to get to grips with Iran's modern history, too, particularly in Tehran. Enter part of the former US embassy, now called the US Den of Espionage; gaze up at Tehran's beautiful Azadi Tower, where hundreds of thousands of people gathered to mark the 1979 revolution and, in 2009, to protest against the regime the revolution delivered; and visit the haunting Iran Holy Defense Museum to learn all about the Iran Iraq war that so traumatised the country. Tehran is also where you can take Iran's contemporary pulse at creative contemporary art galleries and liberal cafe spaces.

Redefining Hospitality

Across Iran, a nation made up of numerous ethnic groups and influenced over thousands of years by Greek, Arab, Turkic and Mongol occupiers, you'll find the people are endlessly welcoming. Offers to sit down for tea will be an everyday occurrence, and if you spend any time at all with Iranians, you'll often find yourself invited to share a meal in someone's home. Say yes whenever you can, and through it experience first-hand, Iranian culture, ancient, sophisticated and warm. It's these experiences that will live longest in the memory.



Why I Love Iran

By Anthony Ham, Writer

What's not to love? The landscapes here are wonderful, from high mountains to deep deserts where the soulful presence of the Asiatic cheetah still roams. There's the architecture and the magic of the bazaars. There's the utterly civilised appeal of taking tea in a teahouse overlooking the river in Esfahan or with nomads out in the Zagros Mountains. Or wandering the mud-brick alleyways of Yazd then venturing to a Zoroastrian fire temple on the cusp of the desert. Yes, I love all of these things. But Iran's greatest gift is its people.

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