



Western Iran ایران غربی

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Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Paradisa Ahura Daniel (p141)
- ➔ Mostofi Restaurant (p143)
- ➔ Negarossaltaneh (p117)
- ➔ Doorchin (p102)
- ➔ Shahriar (p91)

Best Places to Sleep

- ➔ Shushtar Traditional Hotel (p143)
- ➔ Gileboom Eco Lodge (p111)
- ➔ Hotel Anza (p97)
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- ➔ Navizar Hotel (p121)

Why Go?

A land of wild extremes and wilder history, Western Iran is the independent traveller's adventure playground. From the fecund Caspian coast to the stark, mountainous northern borders and the crumbling desert ruins of the southern plains, the region hosts everything from paddy fields to blizzards to the original Garden of Eden. Bordering Mesopotamia, Ottoman Turkey and Czarist Russia, its fortunes have oscillated with the rise and fall of many great empires. This deeply historic, starkly beautiful and incredibly hospitable place is also home to almost half of Iran's Unesco sites.

The region is a linguistic and cultural patchwork: Kurds predominate in Kordestan and Kermanshah; Lurs in Ilam and Lorestan; Arabs inhabit southern Khuzestan; Taleshi and Gilaki are the traditional languages of Gilan; and Azeris, whose language is more Turkish than Persian, predominate in the northwest. In remote regions, and in Kurdish towns, traditional dress is still worn.

When to Go

The craggy peaks of the Zagros Mountains from Hamadan northwards see snow arrive early and leave late – falls are from about November to March, while the sweltering lowlands around Shush begin to boil in June.

To make the most of the region, try visiting for the spring flowers, which bloom in April or May, or the autumn harvest of juicy grapes and delicious mulberries in September or early October.

The crisp, clear air and low, golden light of winter make it the best time for photographing those epic landscapes.

Western Iran

Highlights

- 1 Castles of the Assassins** (p122)
Hiking between flower-filled valleys and snow-capped peaks amid ruined 12th-century castles.
- 2 Masuleh** (p110)
Wandering through Gilan's verdant forests above an amazing stacked village.
- 3 Aras River** (p95)
Exploring ancient churches, mud-walled castles and grand canyons along a sublime river valley.
- 4 Qal'eh Babak** (p97)
Launching an assault on majestic Babak Castle, the emotional heart of Azerbaijan.
- 5 Howrman Valley** (p125)
Venturing into a magical, rarely visited valley of

