



Iran

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Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Kandovan Laleh Rocky Hotel (p153)
- ➔ Dibai House (p157)
- ➔ Niayesh Boutique Hotel (p167)
- ➔ Escan Hotel (p145)

Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Haft Khan (p169)
- ➔ Alborz (p145)
- ➔ Talar Yazd (p164)
- ➔ Baliq (p152)

Why Go?

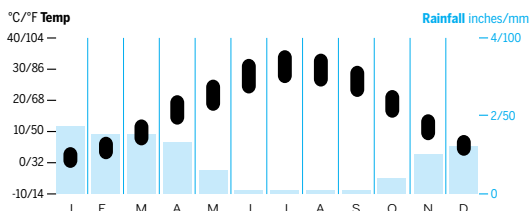
Rewarding doesn't begin to cover Iran as a destination. This exceptionally welcoming country has a multifaceted history and rich, artistic culture manifested in myriad ways. Hospitality is a way of life here and chatting with locals over tea or a meal will likely provide your most memorable moments.

Stunning mosques, palaces and ruins from different eras provide architectural wonder, while the shopping culture of the brilliant bazaars adds a colour beyond description. The outdoors, too, is captivating, with baking deserts and soaring mountain ranges providing a spectacular backdrop wherever you gaze.

Good, cheap transport makes getting around easy and Iran is also very safe for travellers. Though Iranian citizens are often subject to government repression, culturally sensitive and respectful foreigners are unlikely to encounter problems. In fact, many travellers rate Iran as their most-memorable-ever travel experience: come and see why.

When to Go

Tehran



Jan Ski in the Alborz Mountains near Tehran.

Apr Enjoy mild temperatures and spectacular spring flowers.

Oct It's cooled off in the hot south but serious cold hasn't hit the north.

TEHRAN

تهران

📍 021 / POP 15.8 MILLION / ELEV 1184M

A sprawling metropolis and one of the world's 20 largest cities, Tehran is the beating heart of the nation. Iran's capital has a lovely natural setting, sloping down from the Alborz Mountains, through the boutiques and liberal atmosphere of the wealthy north to the poorer, lively south. Rapid growth has come at a cost: terrible traffic and constant pollution mean it's far from relaxing. Still, Tehran's immense cultural vitality, not to mention the impressive museums and galleries it's packed with, make it an intriguing place to visit.

History

Tehran wasn't particularly significant until it became the 19th-century centre of Qajar Persia and steadily expanded. By 1900 it had grown to 250,000 people, and in the 20th century it became one of the most populous cities on earth.

👁️ Sights

👁️ Central & Southern Tehran

Tehran Bazar

BAZAAR

بازار تهران Map p142; main entrance 15 Khordad Ave; ☀️ 7am-5pm Sat-Wed, to noon Thu; 🕒 Panzdah-e Khordad) **FREE** This maze of bustling alleys makes for fascinating exploration. The warren of people and goods is a city within a city and includes guesthouses, restaurants and mosques. Most lanes specialise in a particular commodity: copper, paper, gold, spices and carpets, among others.

Golestan Palace

PALACE

کاخ گلستان Map p142; www.golestanpalace.ir; Arg Sq; admission US\$4.50, plus per sight US\$1.50; ☀️ 9am-4.30pm Sun-Fri; 🕒 Panzdah-e Khordad) This monument to the glories and excesses of the Qajar rulers is made up of several grand buildings set around a carefully manicured garden. Separate tickets cover each.

The **Negar Khane** (Art Gallery) displays a collection of Qajar-era paintings. Portraits of the shahs show dashing figures with catwalk poses and jewelled scabbards. The palace's centrepiece is the small but dazzling **Talar-e-Aineh** (Hall of Mirrors) and its enormous adjoining halls, with fine plaster moulding, mirrorwork, and gifts from European royals.

📍 NEED TO KNOW

- ➔ **Capital** Tehran
- ➔ **Country code** 📞 98
- ➔ **Language** Farsi (Persian), Azari, Arabic, other ethnic languages
- ➔ **Official name** Islamic Republic of Iran
- ➔ **Population** 77.45 million
- ➔ **Currency** Iranian rial (IRR)
- ➔ **Mobile phones** Your foreign SIM may not work. Local SIMs easily obtained (p182).
- ➔ **Money** Foreign credit and debit cards don't work (p181). *Bring all you need in cash.*
- ➔ **Visas** Nearly all need a visa and US, UK and Canadian citizens will need a guide too (see p182).

Exchange Rates

Australia	A\$1	IRR21,665
Canada	C\$1	IRR22,444
Euro zone	€1	IRR29,914
Japan	¥100	IRR23,470
Turkey	1TKL	IRR10,735
UK	£1	IRR41,291
USA	US\$1	IRR28,215

For official exchange rates, see Central Bank of Iran (www.cbi.ir).

- ➔ **Time** 3½ hours ahead of UTC/GMT. Daylight saving late March to late September.
- ➔ **Emergency** 📞 115 (ambulance), 📞 110 (police).
- ➔ **Dress** Women must conform to a dress code (p183).
- ➔ **Transport** Good network of buses, trains, shuttle taxis and domestic flights (p183).
- ➔ **Connections** Direct buses from Turkey, Azerbaijan, Armenia; trains from Turkey. Direct flights from Turkey, Europe, Central Asia and the Gulf (p183).
- ➔ **Alcohol** Banned (see p145).
- ➔ **Daily Costs** Budget hotel double room US\$21, restaurant mains US\$8, six-hour bus US\$5.