

# Iran

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Travel time: Jan.2004, Nov.2003, Feb.1998.

1 Euro = 9910 Rial

A country with very hospitable and helpful citizens. Be as kind as they are. If you get a lift, guide or anything else for free and you change addresses please write them. The utmost danger you can face here is street crossing by night and traveling by taxi.

Be careful by telling them information about your or other countries and cultures because they can misunderstand it very easy. And they are interested in all foreign news.

If you are a women you have to cover your hair and should wear a long shirt and skirt. If you do so you won't have any problems by traveling around also if you are on your own. In this case wearing a wedding ring is useful.

Since September 11 the United States forced Iran to close down their business with credit cards because they might use them to finance terrorists. So forget all credit cards. Even in 5\* hotels like Azadi Grand in Tehran where I stayed in November 2003 no credit cards were accepted. Only cash in Rial, Euro and USD.

All banks will exchange Euro, USD and British Pound but only Bank Melli will exchange Swiss Frank and TC too. Working hours are Sunday to Thursday from 7,30 AM to 1,30 PM. Some are open till 4 PM.

Most prices are displayed or told in "Toman" which is a tenth of the price in Rial.

**RAMADAN:** Traveling at Ramadan is different but not difficult. All restaurants in the city are closed at daylight. Restaurants more fare than 14 km from the outskirts are mostly open. Only they have to cover their windows. At international hotels breakfast and lunch are available all time and you must not stay at them to be served. Also in hospitals the patients are getting a great lunch if desired. Also on the plane you will get something to eat. Food is available everywhere but you should not eat at public places at daylight. The 21st day at and the first day after Ramadan (Fetr) is public holiday. At the last Friday of Ramadan (day of Qods) a large demonstration against USA and Israel will take place in Tehran.

Approximately 40 days after Ramadan the month of Hadg is starting where Muslem trail off to Mekka. At that time the local flight schedule might change because they need the aircrafts for the pilgrimage.

Some hotels do not inform that there is no laundry service on Friday or holiday. They just return your laundry on Saturday. So ask before if you want service on Friday or if you have to leave the hotel at Saturday.

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## Tehran

2004:

Raamtin Residence Hotel (roughly 4\*) at 1081 Valiasr Ave., Tel.: +98 21 8722786 is best choice. The newly renovated hotel has large single/double rooms with good mattress, fridge, heating, direct phone and TV with reception of BBC,

Euro News and D-TV. Only the bathroom is quite small. Also the rooms facing towards the road are quiet because of two layers of insulation glass. They offer Breakfast in different style like western, continental etc. Lunch and dinner too. Internet is available at the business center which is open from 8 AM to 8 PM or from your room if you carry your own notebook with. No laundry service on Friday and holiday. The English speaking staff is friendly and very helpful. The [single room](#) is 55 USD cash. [Map](#)

Just opposite the street is high class restaurant Nayeb. 200 meter further down are restaurant offering cheap Iranian food local style. Stores for everyday essentials are within reach too.

600 meters further down the road is the 4\* Tehran Grand Hotel (roughly 3\*) at No.2 Valiasr - Motahari Ave., Tel.:+98 21 8721656, charges 58 USD cash only for [single](#), 75 USD for [double](#) rooms. Some with nice mattress, some with highly used, all with AC, TV, fridge and including basic breakfast . Because it's located on a junction of two main roads it's a very noisy here and always some construction work is going on. The service is good, and the staff English speaking. The health club resident small swimming pool, some rundown fitness machines and a sauna which is well visited by locals. Entrance fee is 2,5 USD for hotel guests. The restaurant at the top floor serves customary food in traditional atmosphere, the buffet restaurant at the basement is more simple. Around the corner is a tasty bakery, a fast food restaurant and a small supermarket. Along the large street heading downtown you can find lots of shops selling clothes, shoes, pirated CDs and some simple restaurants too. More details at: [www.tehrangrandhotel.com](http://www.tehrangrandhotel.com)

2003:

The 5\* Azadi Grand Hotel is quite rundown (roughly 2,5\*) and located on the northern outskirts of Tehran some 20 minutes ride from the airport. The large and clean [rooms](#) facing towards the mountain range are very quiet and more cool than the one facing south. The rooms are equipped with well used mattresses, AC, TV, telephone and oversized but empty fridge. Nonsmoking rooms are available. The staff can speak some English but is somehow quite gruff. With 129 USD cash only incl. tax it's much too expensive. Breakfast is 58.000R extra but best of the worse I experienced on my last trip. The hotel is located at Chamran Express Way, Evin Crossroad, Tel.: +98 21 2073021. A restaurant serving lunch also at Ramadan, some souvenir shops and Bank Mellì can be found on the first floor. Nothing else is around there except a fun fair which is open only in summer. More details at: [www.azadigrandhotel.com](http://www.azadigrandhotel.com)

A flight with Iran Air from Tehran to Shiraz is 25€ and takes 70 minutes, to Kermanshah 16€ and 50 minutes, to Rasht it's 15€ by plane (only afternoon flights available) or 7€ with shared taxi (pay 20% more for the front seat which is more comfortable but more unsafe too).

Mount Tochal: The mountain is north of Tehran and nearly 4000 meters high. One of the most popular hikes to the top is starting at the village Meidun-e-Darband. To the village take a taxi from the city center for 30.000R which takes you to the bottom of the mountain. Here you have to change to a "village taxi" normally which takes you up to the village itself. From here it's approximately 6 hours (2200hm) on foot if you are a good hiker. From the turning space where taxi drop you just follow the track upwards through the village. Here you will find lots of restaurants where people from Tehran relax on holidays and it can get very crowded at summer. Restaurants are getting rare at 2300 meters. Also the track will get more tricky and between 2450 and 2780 meters it's more a climbing tour. At 2780 meter is the last restaurant which has some overnight accommodation too. Now it's an easy but long walk to the summit crossing a [stone hut](#) at 3500 meters where 30 people can find shelter. Also on the summit you find a [metal igloo](#) but not to stay overnight.

There is also a cable car going to the top. From the city center to the car park of the cable car it's 30.000R. From the car park to the cable car it's 20 minutes on foot or take the bus which runs every 10 minutes. You can leave the cable car at station G3, G5 and G7 which is the top station at 3700 meter. To G5 the return ticket is 28.000R and 22 minutes ride. To G7 change the cable car at G5 and get a return ticket for 20.000R here. It's another 11 minutes ride. From G7 to the peak it's 30 minutes on foot. Last service down is 2 PM from G7 and 3 PM from G5. Along the cable car is a popular hike on wide and easy dirt road to G5. From here to G7 it's less used. More details at: [www.tochal.org](http://www.tochal.org)  
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**Rasht**

2003:

The 4\* Kundus Hotel (roughly 2\*) at Manzarieh blvd., Tel.:+98 131 3223075, offers smelly and well used [single](#) rooms for 42€ including good breakfast. The rooms facing the street are a little noisy. All rooms are with fridge, AC and TV with BBC and Deutsche Welle. Internet available for 30.000R per hour. A coffee shop and a restaurant are in the lobby. Across the street is a fast food restaurant. Swimming pool only open in summer. It's not far to city center.

## Ramsar

2003:

The Ramsar Azadi Hotels at Rajaie Street, Tel.:+98 192 5223593, comprise an old and a new style hotel. With 45 USD including breakfast the old style house is 10 USD more expensive than it's new neighbor. It was one of the most luxury hotels in former time with golden water taps, carpeted walls and [floors](#) with huge chandelier spread a charm of imperialism. It has a nice garden with a summer terrace and a hot mineral spring too. Unfortunately the maintenance of the [interior](#) is very basic like everywhere in Iran. More details at: [www.ramsarazadihotels.com](http://www.ramsarazadihotels.com)

## Kermanshah

2004:

The 4\* Azadegan Hotel (roughly 3\*) is one of the best in town located on the north end towards the mountain range and some 3km from the city center. The area is quiet and even more silent are the rooms facing the mountains. They all have TV with EuroNews and BBC World Channel, telephone, bath, fridge and heating. Most mattress are hard. Breakfast at the hotel restaurant is basic as in most hotels in Iran but lunch and dinner is tasty. A [single](#) room is 65 USD cash only. Rial and USD are excepted. [Map](#)

Around the hotel you can find markets selling everyday essentials, a bakery, barber and a fruit market. The hotel is at Vahdat road, Tel.:+98 831 4239531.

The Jamshid Restaurant is called to be the best in city. For the design and decoration it might come true as for the fresh made bread too but the rest is not worse the large amount of money you have to spend here. The drinks are served with plastic beaker, salad is nearly frozen and the main courses are more tasty anywhere else. It's located at the south west corner of Tagh-e-Bostan, tel.: 4244185

Sightseeing:

At Tagh-e-Bostan which is in the north within the city limits and next to the public park you can see Sassanian Reliefs consist of three different [stone carvings](#). Entrance is 30.000R and much to expensive for that little to see and neither the money is not used to prevent the ancient site from ruin and nor for description.

Next to Tagh-e-Bostan is relaxing parc area with trees, artificial lake and some small restaurants where you get tea and smoke the waterpipe. If you are lucky you can watch the climbers climbing up the [150 meter wall](#) located in the east. Free entrance.

Bisotun is some 30km from Kermanshah on good road. Follow the signs the village to the car park. Next to the car park on the right side you see the resting [Hercules](#) carved in the rock. A little further there is some very nice carving in some 70 meters high called [Darius Relief](#). At the time of writing a metal stair case is built and therefore the site is closed for visitors. At the bottom a inscription carved into the rock can be seen but the description is only in Farsi. Some 200 meters to the west you can see a [large vertical wall](#) which ends in an overhang. This huge wall was carved by humans in many years. Nowadays climbers use this wall and open many routes straight up the 50 meter wall and even some over the overhang. The level of [difficulty](#) starts somewhere above 8 (UIAA) and most of them secured by bolts which looks not that reliable but mostly set every one to two meters. The locals climb them mostly in technical style (A1/A2). If you want to do rock climbing here take the road on the left before you enter the city. It will end at a road block. Here you have to find your way through the trees which is possible. Free entrance up to now

If you continue the road further another 30km to the village of Sahana a 10 meter [waterfall](#) can be discovered. Follow the track through the public park at the hillside of the village. Free entrance.

## **Esfahan**

1998:

Stay at Amirkabir Hotel, Charbagh Str. near the stadium (single 10.000, double 16.000) with English speaking and friendly staff. The place for backpacker. Tel.: 031-296154.

Buy carpets and kilims at:

Carpets & Kilims Export NOMAD

Aliveza Mohmmady

Maydan Naghshe Gahan (Emam) No. 170

PO. 81465-193

Isfahan

Tel.: 0098-31-219275

Fax.: 0098-31-217922

Very friendly and informative staff, good prices and mailing service.

Bus form Esfahan to Yazd for 5.000 rial.

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## **Yazd**

1998:

Stay at Hotel Aria, Kh 10 Farvardin (single with own shower 15.000 Rial), no English speaking staff but OK.

Bus from Yazd to Kerman for 4800 Rial.

## **Kerman**

1998:

Dorm for 4.000 Rial possible at local accommodation. Ask around.

Very impressive bazaar.

Bus to Bam for 4000 Rial.

## **Bam**

2004:

Not even thousands of people died at a strong earthquake end of December 2003. Also the whole city is raze to the ground including the magnificent citadel. At the time of writing it is unclear if the city will be rebuild or rubbed out from the map. It is no place to go in the moment.

1998:

Stay at Ail Abide Guest House at Madam Imam Homing (single 10.000 Rial). From the bus station walk east 500m to the clock tower and further 300m, lock right hand side for the guest house sign at a wall. Very friendly and English speaking staff, dinner available. The place for backpacker.

Absolute highlight: [Arg-e-Bam](#) !!!

## To Pakistan

1998:

Take bus from Bam to Zahedan or hitchhike from the gasoline station at the highway early morning (4am) if the bus is fully booked. From the Zahedan bus terminal take taxi to the southeast end of the city and change taxi from there to the border (20.000 rial for two. They'll cheat you as much as possible!!) or wait for a minibus if available.

From border to border it's only 15 minutes walk. At right hand side is a good toilet for free.

Don't change money directly at both border if you don't know the rate for sure.

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## Shiraz

2003:

The 4\* Shiraz Homa Hotel at Meshkin Fam Street, Azadi Parkside, Tel.: +98 711 2288000 has large [rooms](#) with good bath, rather poor AC, TV, telephone and fridge. Rooms with even numbers are facing towards the road and getting very warm. Better take rooms with uneven numbers facing towards the quiet park area. Internet service is available till 11 PM for 3 Euro per hour and the restaurant is serving lunch also at Ramadan. The tennis court and 25 meter swimming pool is open only in summer. The English speaking staff is helpful. Just around the corner you will find some fast food restaurants, markets for everyday essentials and a billiard club too. To the city center it's only 10 minutes by foot. Single rooms are available for 73 Euro including breakfast. More details at: [www.homahotels.com](http://www.homahotels.com)

Sightseeing:

Vakil Bazaar is resident in a not very old building and the oriental style and charm is missing but nearly everything can be found here except food. Get lost here.

Vakil Mosque might be impressive but they refurbish the floor in the moment and for the next years. No entrance fee.

Hammum-e Vakil located next to the entrance of the Vakil Mosque was a public bath in former time and now a nice oriental style restaurant. Recommendable.

Shah-e-Cheragh Shrine: The walls are covered with thousands of mirror pieces and you feel transferred into a fairytale. You have to leave your shoes at the desk outside the building and please do not face your back towards the shrine while leaving the building. If the guard stops you from entering the site through the beautiful [main gate](#) at Hazrati street just walk through the bazaar on the left a few meters and follow a small unguarded corridor to your right leading to the Shrine too. No entrance fee.

Karim Khani Citadel is a former prison and with it's tall brick wall quite impressive. One tower can lean on Pisa.

Naghsh-e-Rostam: You can see 4 [tombs](#) chiseled into the rocks dated from 400 BC to 200 AC. Some very nice sculptures can be found more left hand side than the brick tower. It's 2.000 Rial entrance fee and some descriptions in English and Farsi are on the spot too. It's some 55 km from Shiraz towards Esfahan.

Persepolis it's only 5 km from Rostam site. It's 2.000R for parking, 30.000R entrance fee and 30.000R extra for the

museum. Persepolis is a impressive expanse of [ruins](#) with some nice stone carving and two tombs but no description can be found here. The museum displays some artifacts from the excavation of the site with some description in English. A nice show with illumination, music and telling in Arabic will be held on Thursday and Friday evening but only in summer.

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