



General Information Note
on the Islamic Republic of Iran
and
the FAO Representation in the Country



This report has been prepared by the FAO Representation in the Islamic Republic of Iran and it is provided for information purposes only.

N.B: The information in this document is subject to change at short notice. Although corrections and addenda are issued as necessary, international personnel are urged to check, before departure, the current government rules and regulations concerning currency control, customs, etc., as well as the rates of hotels. These are susceptible to variations according to prevailing circumstances.

Security clearance must be obtained from the UNDSS Field Security Coordination Officer (FSCO) for travel to and within Iran.

FAO Representation Office
In the Islamic Republic of Iran

1st Floor, Agricultural Research, Education and Extension
Organization, Yemen Street, Velenjak, Chamran Highway, Tehran

Telephone: (0098-21) 22413803; 22429220; 22429320

Fax: (0098-21) 22173836

E-mail: FAO-IR@fao.org

Website: www.fao.org/Iran



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I. FAO Representation in the Islamic Republic of Iran

FAO Representation:

Iran became a member of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) on 1 December 1953. The Representation Office in the Islamic Republic of Iran was re-opened in May 1992 after the Islamic Revolution in 1979.

The Representation Office of FAO in the Islamic Republic of Iran is currently hosted by the Ministry of Jihad-e-Agriculture.

Structure and Staff:

The regular programme staff consists of one International Staff member (FAO Representative), one national Professional and eight national General Staff.

The FAO Representation structure is as follows:

- 1- Office of the Representative (OR);
- 2- Monitoring and Evaluation Unit (MEU);
- 3- Communication and Advocacy Unit (CAU);
- 4- Programme Management Unit (PMU);
- 5- Strategic Partnerships Unit (SPU);
- 6- Administration and Support Unit (ASU).

The FAO Representative to the Islamic Republic of Iran is also accredited to the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO).

Programmes:

In the past twenty years, the major thrust of FAO's technical assistance to Iran had been in the areas of capacity building, policy and strategy development, crop production, livestock and animal health, fisheries and forest management, and, emergency and re-habilitation programme.

FAO is presently reinforcing its country programme and envisages in this context lending assistance towards implementing a comprehensive integrated strategic approach that addresses the current challenges in the food and agriculture sectors in a holistic and sustainable manner. This will entail a significant paradigm shift in the manner in which the assistance would be lent, moving away from the traditional project-focused approach and advocating a programme-based framework that is more results-oriented, leverages the synergies between projects, secures inter-linkages and continuity of projects towards clearly defined and measurable objectives, with quantification and measurement of impact rather than mere output, and leads to long-term sustainability of development activities. The integrated



strategic programme to be implemented in this respect would advocate four major programmes, focusing on: (i) water scarcity and sustainable land management; (ii) food security, nutrition and food safety; (iii) climate smart sustainable eco-agriculture; and (iv) human capital and institutional capacity development.

Contact Persons:

- Mr. Serge Nakouzi, FAO Representative:
Cellular Phone Number: 0098-912-132 92 02
- Ms. Firouzeh Radmehr, Assistant to FAOR (Programme)
Cellular Phone Number: 0098-912-105 40 12

Office Contacts:

Address: 1st Floor, Agricultural Research, Education and Extension Organization, Yemen
Street, Velenjak, Chamran Highway, Tehran

Telephone: (0098-21) 22413803; 22429220; 22429320
Fax: (0098-21) 22173836
E-mail: FAO-IR@fao.org

Working Language: English



II. General Information about Iran

Introduction: Known as Persia until 1935, Iran became an Islamic Republic following the Islamic Revolution of February 1979. Therefore, the Islamic laws are strictly applied in the country.

Head of State: Spiritual Leader (Rahbar) Ayatollah Sayyed Ali Khamenei

Head of Government: President Hasan Rouhani (since 3 August 2013)

Area: 1,648,195 km² (636,372 square miles)

Geographic Coordinates: 32 00 N, 53 00 E

Population: 80,840,713 (July 2014 est.)

Capital: Tehran is the capital of Iran and Tehran Province, located at the geographic coordinates of 35 42 N, 51 25 E. With a population of around 8.3 million and surpassing 14 million in the wider metropolitan area, Tehran is Iran's largest city and urban area, and the largest city in Western Asia.

Major Cities: Tehran, Mashhad, Isfahan, Shiraz, Tabriz

Languages: Persian (official) 53%, Azeri Turkish and Turkish dialects 18%, Kurdish 10%, Gilaki and Mazandarani 7%, Luri 6%, Balochi 2%, Arabic 2%, other 2%

Religion: Muslim (official) 99.4% (Shia 90-95%, Sunni 5-10%), other (includes Zoroastrian, Jewish, and Christian) 0.3%, unspecified 0.4% (2011 est.)

Ethnic Groups: Persian 61%, Azeri 16%, Kurd 10%, Lur 6%, Baloch 2%, Arab 2%, Turkmen and Turkic tribes 2%, other 1%

Local Time: Local time in the Islamic Republic of Iran is G.M.T. + 03:30 hours.

Currency: The currency unit of the I.R. of Iran is Rial, which is convertible to and from any currency at the airports, banks and international hotels. The current UN exchange rate as of 1 July 2016 is 30,589 Rials per one US Dollar. As indicated in the last lines of this note, please make sure to have sufficient cash with you, since Visa Cards and Credit Cards are not operational in Iran.

Electric Current: The electric current in Tehran is 220 Volts.

Geographic Situation: Iran is located in Western Asia. It is bordered on the north by Armenia, Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan, by Kazakhstan and Russia across the Caspian Sea,



on the east by Afghanistan and Pakistan, on the south by Persian Gulf and Gulf of Oman, on the west by Iraq, and on the northwest by Turkey.

Comprising a land area of 1,648,195 km² (636,372 sq mi) and with around 80 million inhabitants (July 2014 est.), Iran is geographically the second-largest country with second-largest population in the Middle East region, and, the 19th-largest-nation in the world. It is the only country that has both a Caspian Sea and Indian Ocean coastline.

Iran has been of geostrategic importance because of its central location in Eurasia and Western Asia and the Strait of Hormuz.

The mountains cover over half of the country. The valleys among the mountains are the main area of agriculture production and industrial centers of the country.

Climate and Weather: Iran's climate ranges from arid or semiarid, to subtropical along the Caspian coast and the northern forests. On the northern edge of the country (the Caspian coastal plain) temperatures rarely fall below freezing and the area remains humid for the rest of the year. Summer temperatures rarely exceed 29 °C (84.2 °F). Annual precipitation is 680 mm (26.8 in) in the eastern part of the plain and more than 1,700 mm (66.9 in) in the western part.

To the west, settlements in the Zagros basin experience lower temperatures, severe winters with below zero average daily temperatures and heavy snowfall. The eastern and central basins are arid, with less than 200 mm (7.9 in) of rain, and have occasional deserts. Average summer temperatures exceed 38 °C (100.4 °F). The coastal plains of the Persian Gulf and Gulf of Oman in southern Iran have mild winters, and very humid and hot summers. The annual precipitation ranges from 135 to 355 mm (5.3 to 14.0 in).

Air Pollution: There is significant air pollution in urban areas in almost all provinces in Iran; this is a risk mainly to those suffering from pre-existing respiratory and cardiovascular conditions, children, pregnant women and elderly. The best way to minimize negative impact at the peak levels of the pollution, which is usually announced in the media, is to follow the public precautionary instructions given by the Public authorities and to keep indoors.

Tehran in particular is believed to be one of the most heavily polluted cities in the world. Because of the Tehran's location - hemmed in by mountains on two sides - there are about 200 days in the year when atmospheric conditions trap the city in a pall of smog. Pollution levels can be particularly bad in winter during periods of high pressure and the young and elderly may be advised not to leave the house for a day or two during such periods. For daily updates on the air quality in various locations within Tehran, visit:

<http://www.tehran.ir/Default.aspx?alias=www.tehran.ir/en>



Natural Resources: Petroleum, natural gas, coal, chromium, copper, iron ore, lead, manganese, zinc, sulphur.

Elevation Extremes: Lowest Point: Caspian Sea -28 m
Highest Point: Mount Damavand 5,671 m

Food and Drinks: The cuisine of Iran is diverse, with each province featuring dishes, as well as culinary traditions and styles, distinct to their regions. The main Persian cuisines are combinations of rice with meat, chicken or fish and some onion, vegetables, nuts, and herbs. Herbs are frequently used along with fruits such as plums, pomegranates, quince, prunes, apricots, and raisins. Iranians also usually eat plain yogurt (Persian: ماست, māst) with lunch and dinner; it is a staple of the diet in Iran. Foods are provided with halal meat.

Prohibited Items for Import: Firearms, alcoholic drinks, illicit drugs and pornographic material, satellite receivers and some other communication equipment (i.s. VHF/HF radio, P2P and internet communication equipment).

III. Accommodation

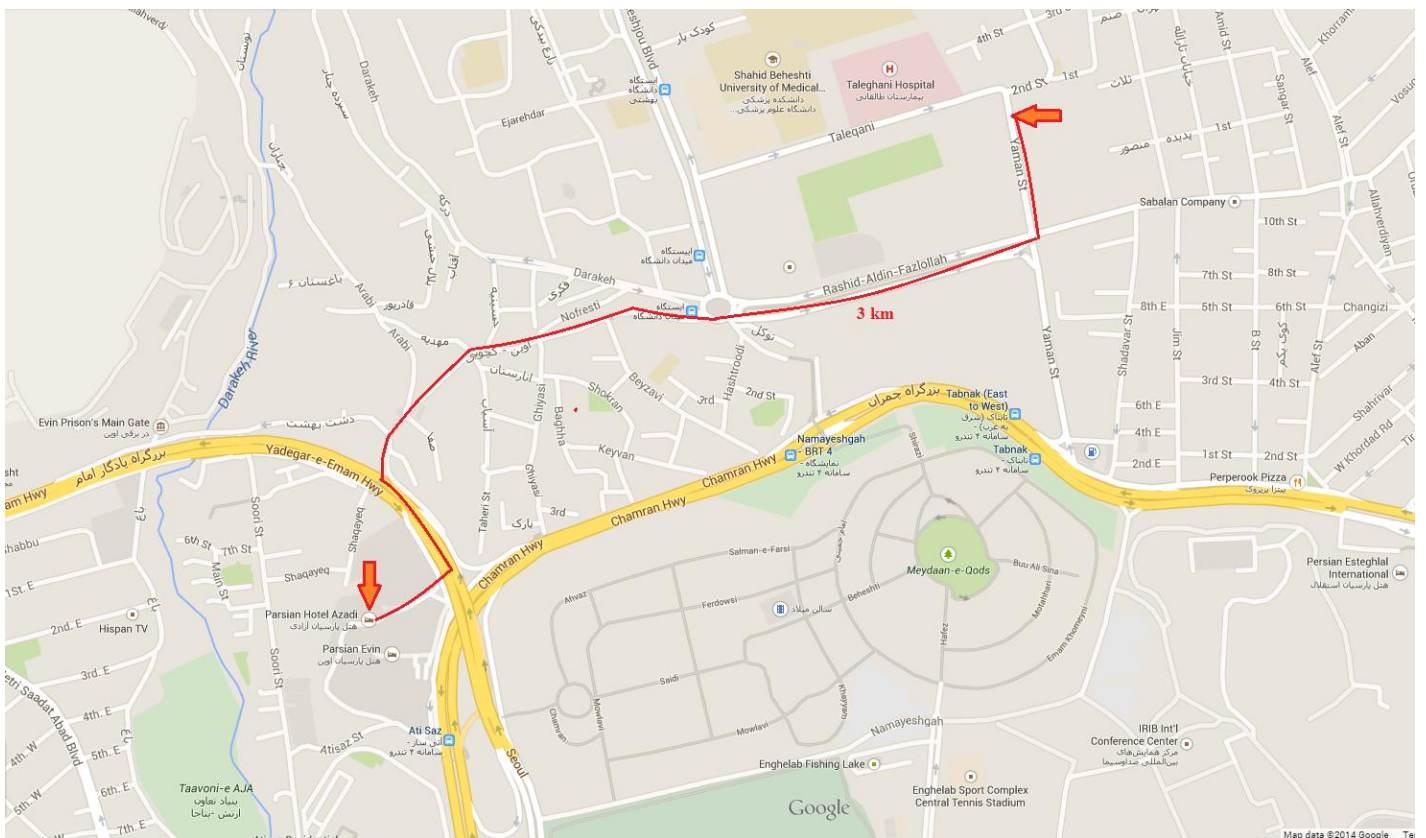
The recommended hotels in Tehran include:

No.	Hotel	Rate	Telephone	Website
1	Azadi	*****	+98-21-29112, 22344444	www.azaditehran.pih.ir
2	Evin	****A	+98-21-2740500	www.evinhotel.net
3	Esteghlal	*****	+98-21-2266 0011-9	www.esteghlalhotel.com
4	Enghelab	****	+98-21-88937251 - 5	www.enghelabhotel.com
5	Homa	*****	+98-21-8877 3021-9	www.homahotels.com
6	Espinas	****	+98-21-83844	www.espinashotels.com
7	Laleh	*****	+98-21-8896 5021-9	www.lalehhotel.com
8	Grand Ferdowsi	****A	+98-21-66727026-31	www.ferdowsihotel.com
9	Hoveyzeh	****	+98-21-88804344-9	N/A
10	Simorgh	****	+98-21-88719911	N/A
11	Tajmahal	****	+98-21-8803 5444	www.tajmahalhotel.ir
12	Grand Tehran	****	+98-21-88718178	www.tehran hotel.org
13	Ramtin	****	+98-21-88722786	N/A
14	Tavrij	***A	+98-21-88033255	N/A
15	Kowsar	****	+98-21-88908121	www.hotelkowsar.com
16	Eram	***	+98-21-22266644-5	www.tehraneramhotel.ir
17	Niloo	***	+98-21-88202018	N/A

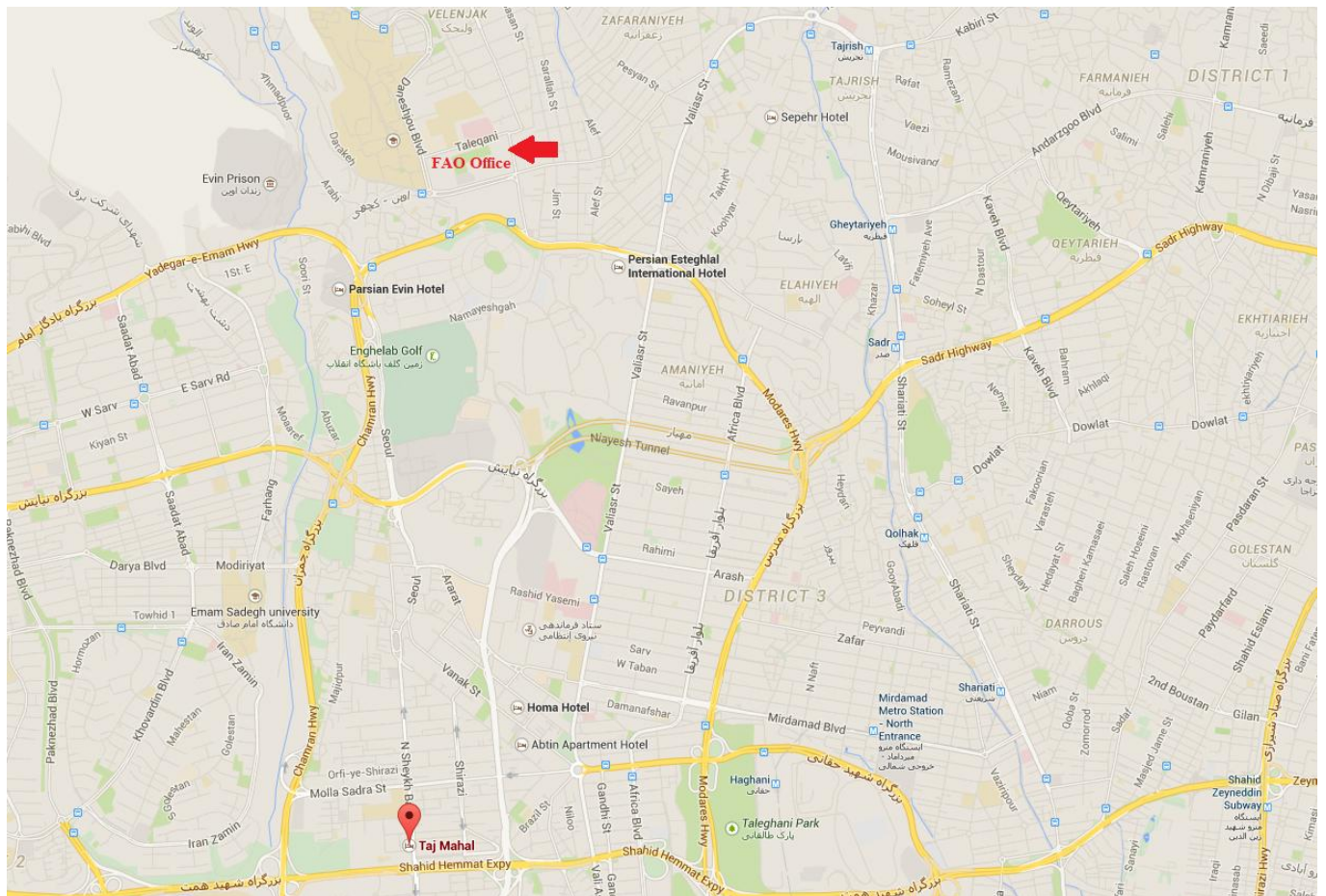


FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS Representation in the Islamic Republic of Iran

The FAO Representation usually hosts its international staff and missions in the *Parsian Azadi Hotel*, which is located near the FAO Representation with a 3 km distance:



Location of Taj Mahal hotel and the FAO Office on the map:



IV. Recreation

Historical Sites to Visit in Tehran:

- Azadi Tower- Azadi Square, Tehran
- National Garden- Emam Khomainsi Street, Tehran
- Golestan Palace- 15th Khordad Square, Tehran
- Green Palace- Saadabad Palace, Tehran
- Shams-ol Emareh- Naser Khosro Street, Tehran
- Toghrol Tower- Shahr-e-Ray, Tehran
- City Theater- Vali-e-Asr Junction, Enghelab Avenue, Tehran



Bazaars:

- *Grand Bazaar:* The Grand Bazaar is a historical market situated in southern Tehran. It is called “Bazaar-e-Bozorg” in Farsi language, in which all types of the goods such as handicrafts, paintings, carpets, rugs, etc. are available. Its many corridors are over 10 km in length and there are several entrances, some of which are locked and guarded at night. The Grand Bazaar is the main business artery of Tehran.
- *Tajrish Bazaar:* Tajrish neighbourhood is located along the northern edge of Tehran. This neighbourhood is one of the oldest parts of Tehran and during the last few decades have become popular with the upper-classes of the society as a result of the low levels of pollution, in turn created by the area's favourable location along Tehran's northern hills. Tajrish is situated in the Shemiranat County. It is hardly 15 Kilometers away from the FAO office.
- *Safavieh Shopping Centre or Bazaar-e-Safavieh:* It is located in Vali-e-Asr Ave., in front of the Mellat Park.
- *Other Shopping Centers:* Handicraft Shops are available in the hotels, as well as in bazaars, shopping centers and in other places in the centre of Tehran.

Museums:

- *The Shah's Palaces:* Saadabad and Niavaran Palaces are located near Tajrish.
- *Old Persian Museum or Muzeh Iran-e-Bastan:* Is located in city center on Imam Khomeini Ave., Si-e-Tir St.
- *Jewelries Museum or Muzeh Javaherat:* Is located in the city centre on Ferdowsi Ave.
- *Anthropology Museum or Muzeh Mardom Shenasi:* Is located in city centre on Imam Khomeini Ave., Si-e-Tir St.
- *Carpet Museum or Muzeh Farsh:* Is located in Parke-e-Laleh, on Karegar Ave.
- *Contemporary Museum or Muzeh Honarhaye Moaser:* Is located in Laleh park.

Sightseeing:

- *Darabad:* It is beautiful mountain valley and about 25 Kilometers away from FAO office.
- *Towchal Telecabin:* Towchal Telecabin is probably the world's longest gondola lift lines with a length of 7500 m. This gondola lift is used for accessing ski resorts and other recreational centres on the mountain. Beautiful landscape, mountain fresh air and a multitude of fresh water springs adds to the freshness of the area. It has seven stations and it takes 35 minutes to get to the high peak of Towchal.



V. Healthcare

General:

Air pollution is a major problem in Tehran, particularly in the winter. If you suddenly start coughing, having headaches and stomach pains after a day or two in the capital, you are probably just reacting to the unhealthy air. People with heart/respiratory conditions are advised to stay indoors during smog alerts.

Medical care in the urban centres in Iran is of a high standard. Doctors (general and specialist) are well trained with many speaking good English. The main weakness of the state medical care system however, lies in lack of resources and this is reflected in the quality of hospital facilities.

Hospital Numbers:

- Jamaran (heart) : 0098-21-22290204/9
- Iran Mehr : 0098-21-22009071, 0098-21-22009720
- Baghiyatolah : 0098-21-88050435
- Khatamolanbia : 0098-21-88797751/9
- Day : 0098-21-88785811/9
- Labafinejad : 0098-21-22549010/18
- Arad : 0098-21-77601095/7
- Mehrad : 0098-21-88747401/9
- Madaen : 0098-21-66405706/7
- Amir Aalam : 0098-21-66708103/5
- Marvasti : 0098-21-66702011/5
- Kasra : 0098-21-88797611/19

Pharmacies:

There are numerous chemists (pharmacies) here, including several 24-hour chemists (*shabaneroози*), which stock most commonly used medicines. Although most prescription drugs will be available locally in their generic forms, it may not always be possible to find a particular formulation. Sanctions have negatively affected availability of many imported pharmaceuticals. So, if you have a chronic condition that requires a specific drug, bring enough with you to start with. Antibiotics are overused here and locally produced antibiotics are of variable quality so, if you can, bring some with you. Be aware about the presence of counterfeit below quality drugs.

The UN in Iran has an arrangement with UNDP in Geneva to provide UN staff with necessary medicines not available in Iran.



The 24-hour pharmacies in North Tehran are as follows:

Taleghani Pharmacy – near Ghods Square on Shariati Avenue.
Ershad Pharmacy - Zarrabkhaneh Junction, Shariati Avenue.
Pasdaran Pharmacy – by 7 Bustan Street, Pasdaran Avenue.
Setareh Pharmacy – Ghods intersection, Sa’adat Abad.
Saba-e Zafaraniyeh Pharmacy – Zaferaniyeh Trade Centre, by Zaferaniyeh Street, Vali-e Asr Avenue.
Gholhak Pharmacy – Gholhak Street, Shariati Avenue.
Ghanun Pharmacy – Vanak Square.

VI. Emergency Contact Numbers

In case of any emergency, visitors should contact in the first instance the *Iran Radio Room* (Tango Sierra Base) on the following numbers:

Land Line: 0098-21-22 86 94 89
Satellite: 0088 216 888 00538

Other emergency contact numbers include:

- UN Security Advisor (DSS), Mr. Zafar Sheralov: 0098-912-315 79 44
- LSA (DSS), Mr. Ali Solhjoo: 0098-912-203 06 75
- FAO Alternate Security Focal Point, Ms. Sogol Mehrani: 0098-936 847 51 98

VII. Dress Code

Dress code (for women):

The Islamic Republic of Iran operates a dress code that requires all women (over the age of 9 years) to wear *hijabas* it must be applied and adhered to under all weather conditions and in all public places. In the street and in private offices, places of entertainment etc. this may be quite relaxed with a tunic (*roo-pooshor manto*) to the knees, or lower, and a headscarf. Normally speaking, a plain headscarf that covers the hair and neck is the easiest option since bright patterns and colours (although now worn by many Iranian women) tend to draw attention to you as a foreigner. Generally, it is easier (and more acceptable) to wear trousers or jeans under the *roo-poosh/manteau*. It is also advisable to wear socks if you prefer sandals in summertime. The *chador* (full black cloth, covering the head and reaching the ground) is not normally compulsory except when visiting shrines, the tomb of the late Imam Khomeini and the holy city of Qom.



If you are visiting a government building or institution on business, you do not have to use a *maghna'e* (sort of wimple worn by most Iranian government workers) although you may find it quite comfortable once you get used to it. Black (although commonly worn) is not compulsory, but be careful to wear sober colours and make sure your *roo-poosh/manteau* is loose fitting and long enough.

When going out to dinner in a restaurant or inside 4- to 5-star hotels in major cities such as Tehran, Esfahan and Shiraz, you can feel relatively free to wear more stylish and colourful *hijab*. Again, as long as the hair is reasonably well covered and you are wearing what passes for a *roo-poosh*. In provincial cities and less 'international' hotels/restaurants, wear more sober dress to avoid any difficulties. There is a difficult balance to be struck between being both sufficiently conservative and, at the same time, as chic as the average Iranian woman manages to be in such situations! However, it is always a good idea to be a bit more careful in your dress than the somewhat adventurous young women of Tehran. The above also applies to going to the theatre or cinema.

Dress code (for men):

Although men are freer in their dress than women it is generally expected that they will wear long-sleeved shirts at work, particularly when visiting government offices or institutions. It is also advisable to avoid tight-fitting trousers and jeans are certainly not acceptable in a work environment. Iranian men do not generally wear a tie but most foreigners are expected to – the choice is yours, as long as you wear a smart shirt. In the heat, a long-sleeved shirt is preferable to a short-sleeved one since you can then take your jacket off more easily when the occasion allows. Inside offices and similar buildings, you should always wear your jacket however hot it is outside and so it is highly advisable to have one or two summer-weight (not wool) suits for mid-June to mid-August in Tehran (a longer season if you are in the South of the country).

When eating out in restaurants or visiting an upper-end hotel in Tehran and other major cities, men generally wear smart casual or a business suit if they have come from work. It is not normally *de rigueur* in hotel restaurants, for example, for men to wear a jacket as long as the emphasis is on smart. Iranians tend to be very smart in their dress even when being casual - shoes are generally immaculately shone and clothes always look as though they have just been laundered!

Both men and women:

During the first ten days of the Islamic month of Muharram, avoid wearing light or bright colours since this is traditionally a time of mourning and for wearing black or sombre colours.

Segregation rules:



Segregation rules are likely to affect you as well. For instance, there is separate seating in the metro and in buses (there are separate queues too) and it can lead to ‘musical chairs’ in shared taxis. Any public buildings where there are security checks (e.g. theatres, airports and universities) have separate entrances. However, once inside, you can sit together in the theatre. There are also separate times (or facilities) at sports centres and separate beaches on the Caspian Sea coast and on Kish Island.

VIII. Etiquette

In general, it is usual at Iranian dinner parties to put everything (including soup if there is one) on the table at the same time and not to serve courses separately. It is also less usual with traditional Iranian food to offer a dessert as such – there may be fruit and/or sweet pastries with the tea after the meal. When confronted with a large number of dishes, you do not have to eat everything but, if you can manage even a small taste of most dishes your host(ess) will be satisfied.

When you are offered tea, a plate of fruit and some sweet pastries, accept everything that is offered, but you do not have to eat it all – it is not impolite to leave fruit or sweets uneaten on your plate.

Iranians are extremely polite people; the word for this is “tarooft”. Gifts are reciprocated. Do not be surprised if a taxi driver refuses to accept your fare! He does not really mean it, so you should respond with polite insistence.

IX. Taboos

Kissing, hugging or shaking hands (any physical contact, really) between men and women in public are to be avoided. Sometimes this is difficult when an Iranian themselves insists on a handshake – just make your own judgement as to when it may be appropriate, but never initiate.

Never get straight to the point when in a meeting with an Iranian. Always expect to drink one or two cups of tea (remember to offer them if in your own office) and to make small talk about before getting down to business. The same applies to telephone conversations where you should always begin by asking after the health of the person you are calling (and their family if you have met them) before stating your business.

Be careful if you are a man about asking after someone’s wife unless they have previously introduced you to her. Women can do so with impunity. If you have to blow your nose in public, do so as discreetly and quietly as you can. Avoid gesturing with the thumb since the ‘thumbs up’ in Iran is the equivalent of giving the middle finger.



X. Utilities

Electricity

The electricity supply in Iran is 220 (240) volts 50 Hz and 15 amp round two-pin plugs are used. Thus, European electrical items can be used in Iran without any problem (and adapters for UK three-pin plugs are readily available in electricians' shops for about a dollar). Telephone sockets are also two-pin and so be careful to plug your telephone into the correct one (the telephone socket usually has a telephone symbol on it), especially modems. Adapter plugs for telephones/modems can be found locally.

Electricity is subject to unexpected cuts at any time of day or night, although these do not generally last more than an hour or two. But it is advisable to be aware of potential damage to sensitive electrical equipment and make sure that the building has an emergency generator for the lift (elevator) before you rent a 15th floor apartment! Keep a supply of candles and matches at hand.

Water

The water supply to the major cities is generally safe to drink, although be wary in smaller towns and rural areas. There is piped water available throughout Tehran, and it is safe to drink even though heavily chlorinated. A useful tip is to fill a bottle of water and leave the top off for the chlorine to off-gas before putting it in the fridge. Many people prefer to use bottled water, especially in North Tehran since some of the water in this area may be from deep wells. Water filters (Brita, YazdeGol) are also available.

XI. Transportation

There are taxi/transport agencies in all neighborhoods of Tehran. The following numbers are cable taxis:

- 133
- 1828
- 1821 (Women cable Taxi)
- Hotels also provide taxi services (including the recommended hotels).



XII. Communication

Telephone Services and Codes:

Directory enquiries:

Tehran	118
International	195
Outside Tehran	333333-6
Mehrabad Airport	9111
International Flight Info	91028
Imam Khomeini Airport (IKIA)	51001

International access code	00
Iran country code	98
Tehran city code	021
Esfahan city code	0311
Mashhad city code	0513

Dialing Tips:

- ❖ *Note:* For dialing local cellphone numbers, please dial 0 instead of the country code (0098); i.e. 0912-1054012
- ❖ *Note:* For dialing local land line numbers from a land line, please dial the number without the country code and the city code; i.e. 22413803
- ❖ *Note:* For dialing local land line numbers from a local cell phone, please dial the city code (Tehran: 021) before the local number.
- ❖ *Note:* For dialing internationally, please dial 00 and then the country code (98) and the city code. (Tehran: 21)

XIII. Important Notes

- ❖ *Note:* Please make sure to carry your cellphone with yourself.
- ❖ *Note:* At the Imam Khomeini Airport in Tehran, you may purchase Iranian sim cards.
- ❖ *Note:* Currency Restrictions: No access to cash withdrawal using international Credit Cards/ATM.



A Few Words and Phrases in the Local Language (Farsi):

- Hello, how are you?: *Salam, chetorid?*
- Good Morning: *Sobh be Kheir*
- Good Evening: *Asr be Kheir*
- Help: *Komak*
- I am lost: *Man gom shodam.*
- Taxi: *Taxi*
- I am foreigner, I cannot speak Farsi: *Man khareji hastam. Nemitavanam Farsi sohbat konam.*