

## Persepolis



No trip to Iran is complete without a visit to the birthplace of [ancient Persian civilization](#) and capital of the first Persian Empire over 2,500 years ago, Persepolis. This awe-inspiring place requires a bit of imagination to reconstruct, but the towering columns in the once lavish palaces gives an idea of just how lofty this city once was. Walk in the footsteps of the great Persian kings as you contemplate the numerous reliefs and statues of a once-grand empire.

*[Persepolis, Fars Province](#)*

## Yazd



Simply put, [Yazd](#) has good energy, amazing sites, kind people, and delicious food. Known as the city of *badgir*, Yazd is not only dotted with these architecturally amazing windcatchers, it is also home to the tallest one, in Dowlat Abad Garden. The Towers of Silence, Fire Temple, and pilgrimage site of Chak Chak provide wonderful insight into the [Zoroastrian religion](#), while Amir Chakhmagh Square and the city's Ashura festival show the Islamic side. An all around win-win, this desert town should be ranked as high as Shiraz and Esfahan on anyone's first trip to Iran.

[Yazd](#)

## Naqsh-e Jahan Square



*Naqsh-e Jahan Square is probably the main attraction in Esfahan, and what earns it the nickname nesf-e jahan, 'half the world'. Built in the 17th century, this massive square was once a royal polo field. The sites on each side are connected by a two-story arcade. Imam Mosque enraptures visitors with its lofty tiled ceilings, while Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque dazzles with its off-center dome. You can walk up the mosaic stairs of Ali Qapu to get some of the best views before strolling through the Imperial Bazaar.*

*Naqsh-e Jahan Square, Esfahan*



## Ali Sadr Water Cave



About 100 km north of Hamedan lies the Ali Sadr Water Cave. Rediscovered in the 1960s by Iranian excavators, this extensive network of subterranean chambers, water passageways, and lakes was inhabited over 12,000 years ago, as indicated by the artwork and pottery found inside. Historically, this cave was also used as a safe refuge for the Safavid Army. Pedal boats will guide you through the crystal clear waters that measure an average of five meters in depth. Fantastic geological structures cover the walls, and shapes of animals and other figures can be made out in the stalactites and stalagmites.

[Ali Sadr Cave, Hamedan Province](#)

### *Shushtar Historical Hydraulic System*



Hailed as a 'masterpiece of creative genius' by UNESCO, this ancient irrigation system dates to the time of Darius the Great in the 5th century BCE. Two main diversion canals on the Karun River supply water to the city of Shushtar through a series of tunnels. Climb to the top of the hill to view this feat of engineering from above before heading back down to tour the bridges, dams, and mills in detail. Ducks, egrets, and other fauna call this World Heritage Site home.

Shushtar Historical Hydraulic System, Taleghani St, Shushtar, Khuzestan Province

## Lut Desert



The first natural site to be listed with UNESCO in 2016, the Lut Desert has been recorded as the hottest place on earth for seven consecutive years, with temperatures reaching a scorching 159.3°F (70.7°C). Despite the heat, however, this vast, barren space offers an unusual silence and tranquility among the yardangs (sand ridges), which continuously change shape. Pick your favorite to hike up and get a better view from above as the afternoon sun sinks and the temperatures become more tolerable.

*Lut Desert, Kerman Province*



## Nasir ol-Molk Mosque



Nasir ol-Molk Mosque in Shiraz is by some accounts the most beautiful mosque in Iran. Nicknamed 'The Pink Mosque' due to its various hues of pink tiles, this mosque is best visited in the morning, when it is illuminated by the sunlight pouring in through the stained-glass windows, creating a kaleidoscope of colors on the Persian rugs — and on visitors. Becoming a part of and capturing this exquisite mosque on film is sure to be a highlight of your visit to Iran.

## Historical houses and rooftops of Kashan



Kashan is situated 250km south of Tehran and is home to some of the most beautiful historical buildings in the country. Fin Garden (a UNESCO-listed Persian garden), Boroujerdi House, Ameriha House, and Tabatabaei House are just some of the stars brightening this desert city. You'll find grand courtyards with central pools and lovely gardens outside, before walking through the doors to discover exquisite frescoes. The rooftop of the Sultan Amir Ahmad Bathhouse looks as if pods from outer space have landed on it, and has spectacular skyline views.

Kashan



## Bisotun



Bisotun is located along the ancient trade route linking the Iranian high plateau with Mesopotamia and features remains from the prehistoric times. The principal monument of this archaeological site is the bas-relief and cuneiform inscription ordered by Darius I, when he rose the throne of the Persian Empire. The sculpture portrays Darius holding a bow, a sign of dominance, and treading on the chest of a figure who lies on his back before him. According to legend, the figure represents Guamate, the Median Magus, and pretender to the throne, whose assassination led to Darius' rise to power. On the sacred mountain of Bisotun in Western Iran is a remarkable multilingual inscription carved on a limestone cliff about 60 meters above the plain. Bisotun is an outstanding testimony to the important interchange of human values on the development of monumental art and writing.

## Pasargadae



Pasargadae was the first dynastic capital of the Achaemenid Empire, founded by Cyrus II the Great, in Pars, the homeland of Persians, in the 6th century B.C. Its palaces, gardens, and the tomb of Cyrus are outstanding examples of the first phase of royal Achaemenid architectures and exceptional testimonies of Persian civilization. Pasargadae was the capital of the first vast multicultural empire in Western Asia. Spanning the Eastern Mediterranean and Egypt to the Hindus River, it is considered to be the first empire that respected the cultural diversity of its different people. This was reflected in their architecture, a representation of distinctive cultures. Pasargadae located close to Shiraz.



## Vakil Bazaar



Vakil Bazaar or Vakil Al-Roaya is one of the most famous traditional and historical markets in Iran. This bazaar, which was built by order of Karim Khan Zand, is now located in the center of Shiraz. Other frequently visited tourist attractions such as the Vakil mosque and the historic Vakil bath are located next to the bazaar, and similar to other Middle Eastern bazaars, there are a few mosques and Imamzadehs constructed beside or behind the bazaar that are places of interest for those visiting the bazaar. The market has five large wooden doors located on all four sides that provide excellent access to the bazaar. Inside, the sightseers and shoppers face two corridors from North to south and east to west of the bazaar, intersecting like a cross. The bazaar has beautiful courtyards, caravanserais, bathhouses, and old square shops on two floors. These shops have kept to the antique theme they were built in and are filled with the most colorful and beautiful merchandise that captures the attention of various groups of visitors and are deemed among the best places in Shiraz to buy all kinds of Persian rugs, spices, copper handicrafts, and antiques.



## Vank Church



Walking in Isfahan's bazaars and historic districts, you may find this city a whole Islamic style city. Still, in Jolfa, an Armenian neighborhood in Isfahan, there is a different lifestyle going on to everyone's surprise. Vank Church is the highlighted part of this elite neighborhood. This church is a combination of Islamic, Iranian, and Armenian style of Architecture. Right next to the church, there is a Museum of Armenian history and heritage. Jolfa is home to all Armenian people of Isfahan. They are kind-hearted and welcome the visitors who are into the Armenian lifestyle. This variety of cultures, architecture, lifestyle, and religion has made Isfahan a glory in Iran's middle and one of Iran's top destinations.

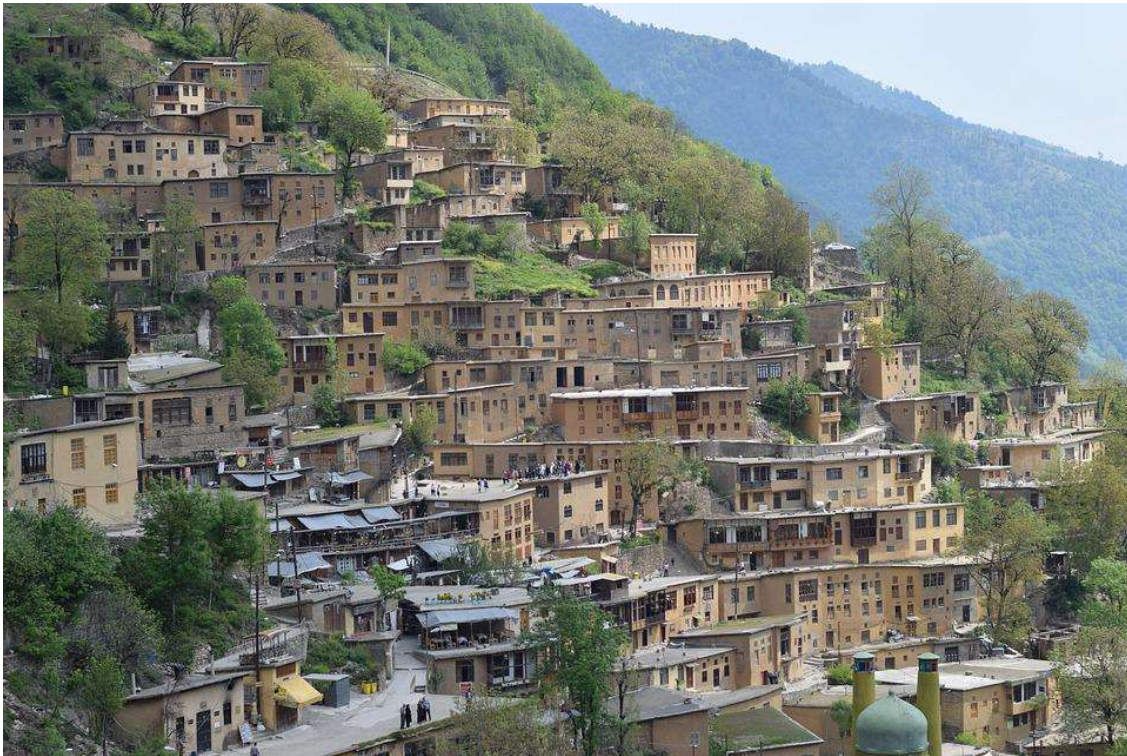
## Kish Island



One of the islands in the Persian Gulf is Kish Island. This beautiful island is not like other parts of Iran. The culture is a mixture of Iranian – Arabic lifestyle. Local's jobs are mostly related to the sea, and the island's business character has been through many changes in previous years. As soon as you get there, there a variety of activities you can do and places you can visit The Greek Ship is one of them as well as the Kish Dolphin Park and Maryam beach. Kish is a very favorite travel destination among Iranians. They try to head to Kish during the Fall and Winter; Kish Island is very hot during the summertime. If you feel annoyed by extreme humid weather, visiting Kish Island in the summer is not recommended. No wonder if you find it completely different from Iran's other top places. Nature is also very strange on this island. Travelers who have been there always have memories about camping by the seashore and different adventurous experiences. Make sure you will try snorkeling and swimming in the blessed water of the Persian Gulf. This gives you the chance to meet locals and have fun with them.



## Masoule



Masoule is one of those must-see places in Iran. Asking why? Here is a place you can easily immerse yourself in the culture of local people, enjoy wonderful weather, and satisfy your aesthetic taste watching fascinating landscapes. Masoule is among the few stepped villages in Iran. Masouleh is a foggy village full of beautiful houses that have been built on top of each other. When you walk through the back alleys of the village, which are often covered in fog, you will see these yellow and spectacular houses with the candle vases that are present in all these houses. There are some peaks around Masoule you can ascend; hiking up these hills you will feel like being totally isolated from the whole world. However, it is not only the fascinating and unique architecture of Masoule that has made this stepped village popular with tourists; Masoule is full of high mountains, forests, and fascinating and amazing sights.



## Arg-e Bam



Bam, one of the ancient cities in Kerman Province, is several thousand years old. This city owes its popularity to Arg-e Bam, also called Bam Citadel. This fortified medieval town was home to people of all social ranks. Arg-e Bam is a great representative example of an adobe structure. Thus, UNESCO inscribed it on the World Heritage List as the world's largest adobe construction before the 2003 earthquake. Following this devastating earthquake, Arg-e Bam was restored and it was reborn like a proud Phoenix. Let's walk in the streets of this ancient city to touch the antiquity.

Why Visit Arg-e Bam?

- \*UNESCO has inscribed Arg-e Bam on the list of World Heritage.

- \*It is the most well-known tourist attraction in Kerman.

- \*Arg-e Bam is an extraordinary adobe construction, which was considered as the largest adobe architectural structure in the world prior to the 2003 earthquake.

- \*Arg-e Bam is an exceptional example of a Persian medieval city town.

- \*It features amazing architecture as well as intelligent techniques of engineering.

- \*Arg-e Bam is mentioned in Shahname (the Persian book of the kings) and an absorbing story is narrated about it