

# *Iran*



# Planning & Visa

I was planning to visit Iran for 2 weeks, to see as many places as I could in 2 weeks. Plan was to cover Tehran, travel through the beautiful Alborz Mountains on Road 59 to see Chalus on the Caspian sea, Qom, next to the beautiful Rasht, Tabriz and Kandovan village, Kashan, Isfahan, Yazd, Shiraz, Bandar Abbas (Hormuz and Qeshm Island on Persian Gulf). So lot of places to cover in 2 weeks.

I applied for visa on Iran visa site but that takes a lot of time without any progress so I contacted TapPersia (an iranian travel agency) to get my visa code and travel insurance. I also took their help to book Train and Bus tickets, since Foreign Debit/Credit cards don't work in Iran, you need someone in Iran to book tickets for you.

I went to Iran Embassy in New Delhi, to collect my visa, but they sent me to a travel agency in Delhi to process my visa. After some problems I got my visa just the day before I had to travel to Iran. I had booked Air Arabia flight from New Delhi to Sharjah and next connecting Air Arabia flight from Sharjah to Tehran.



# Day 1 : Arriving in Tehran



**Baharestan Square, Tehran**

Changed Indian currency to USD and Euro at Delhi airport. I was not very sure how much cash to take, but its always good to have some extra cash. Air Arabia flight was scheduled in early morning, reached Sharjah in morning, the connecting flight to Tehran was in afternoon. Reached Imam Khomeini International Airport (IKA), Tehran around 2 PM.

Went to the money exchange counter at IKA but they were running out of cash, they asked me to wait for some time. Waited for some time, then exchanged USD to Iranian Rial. Got the Iran Cell sim and a VPN installed on my mobile at IKA.

There was one Japanese person who was going to the same hostel (Heritage Hostel Tehran), so we both hopped into a taxi from IKA to our hostel in Baharestan.

Reached Tehran Heritage Hostel around 5:30 PM, checked in and kept my luggage. The VPN I got installed from the airport was not working and also I was hungry. So went out in the evening, had some food and after asking a few local people, found a mobile shop, got a new VPN installed and this was working.



# Day 2 : Exploring Tehran



**Tehran City from Milad Tower**

Next morning walked to Tehran grand bazaar from the hostel in Baharestan. It's a big bazaar with shops selling different things in different alley.





## Grand Bazaar, Tehran

Next I took the Tehran metro to reach Maidan-e-Azadi. I had cash but you can't buy Tehran metro ticket from cash, the person sitting at the station allowed me to simply board the metro. And on various other times I asked people to buy a metro ticket for me, and they refused to take money from me.

As you get out of Maidan-e-Azadi metro you see the beautiful monument which till now you had only seen in photos. Stunning and a very different design.





**Azadi Tower, Tehran**

Next I took the metro again to reach Milad Tower. Took the ticket to go to the open observatory, 15 USD for foreigners. Beautiful views of Tehran city also the wind was very powerful at the top.





## **Tehran City from Milad Tower**

Next on my list was Tabiat bridge, so took the metro to reach Shahid Haqqani, the nearest metro to Tabiat bridge. Had to walk a bit to reach the Tabiat bridge from the metro station, it was evening time and with all the lights it looks very beautiful.





**Tabiat Bridge, Tehran**



## Day 3 : Journey to Chalus



### **Snow Capped Alborz Mountains, Jadde Chalus**

Next morning I had to go to Chalus which is a city on the Caspian Sea in Mazandaran province.

So I went to Junoob bus terminal, to only find out that bus for Chalus leaves from Azadi Bus terminal and not Junoob bus terminal. Took a taxi from Junoob bus terminal to Azadi bus terminal, purchased the bus ticket.



The bus passed through the beautiful Alborz mountains on Road 59, also called Jadde Chalus. Since it was March the Alborz mountains were snow capped.

The bus dropped me in Chalus on the main road, I had to go to Chalus beach. But I didn't know how to get there, one young man who was selling some vegetables around the road helped me get a Snapp taxi which dropped me to Chalus beach. The young man told me that he is turkish and belongs to Ardabil.



**Chalus Beach on Caspian Sea, Mazandaran**

## Day 4 : Exploring Qom



**Imam Hasan al-Askari Mosque, Qom**

I actually had the plan to go to Sari by train, but the train got cancelled. So I decided to go to Qom. Took the bus from Junoob terminal, after 2 hours journey from Tehran I was in Qom. Spent some time in Qom and then took a bus to Tehran.





**Beautiful Chandelier in the Mosque, Qom**





**Beautiful Symmetry in the Mosque, Qom**



## Day 5 : Train to Rasht



**Tehran Railway Station**

Next day early morning went to Tehran railway station to catch the train to Rasht which is capital of Gilan province. Got my Tourist Card from Pasargad bank, now I didn't need to carry large amount of cash. Also got Snapp taxi app installed on my phone.





### **My Tourist Card from Pasargad Bank**

Train departed at 5:40 AM and reached Rasht around 12. Took a taxi from Rasht railway station to Rasht city center.





**Rasht Bazaar**





## **Clock Tower, Rasht**

I took a taxi from Rasht to Fuman and then from Fuman to Maslueh village. The scenery was very different and beautiful, mountains covered with fog.

After walking around Masuleh village I head back to Rasht, as I had to catch a bus to Tabriz in the night. Thanks to Sohrab from TapPersia, he booked the bus ticket for me at the very last moment.





**Masuleh Village**



## Day 6 : Exploring Tabriz and Kandovan



### Grand Bazaar, Tabriz

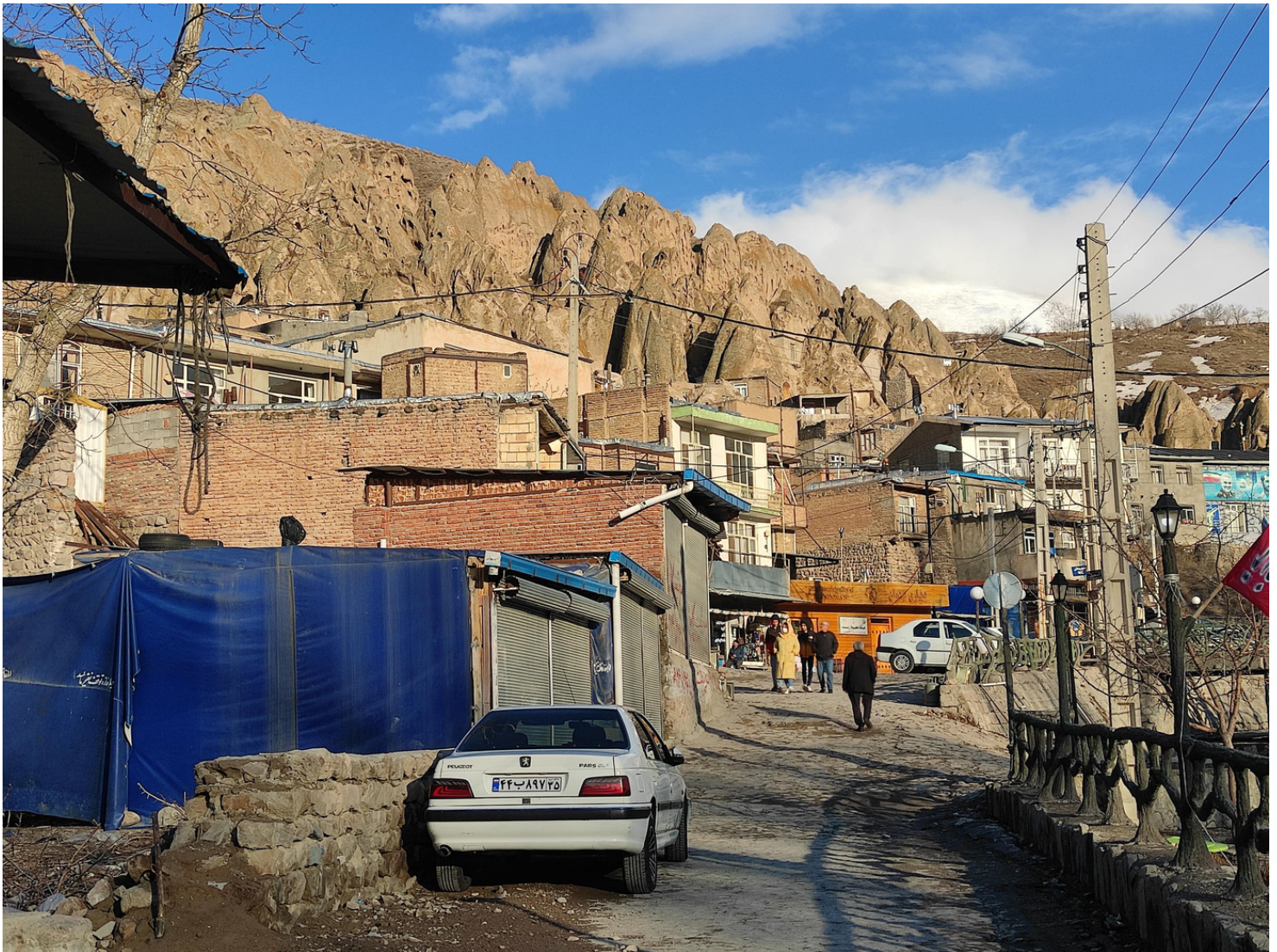
Reached Tabriz Bus station in the morning, took a taxi to reach Tabriz Bazaar. Walked around Tabriz bazaar, I had lost my mobile charger adapter in Rasht so bought a new one from the bazaar.

The bazaar is very old and few mosques in the bazaar were constructed way back in history. Got to know that most of the people in Tabriz have Turkish origin.



After some time check in to a hotel, took a short nap, hot shower and got ready to visit Kandovan village.

After couple of hours reached Kandovan village where people have their home carved out in the mountains. Spent some time walking around the villlage, then started my journey back to Tabriz. Reached Tabriz in night, had some food at a local shop.



**Kandovan Village**



## Day 7 : Train from Tabriz to Tehran

Next morning, walked around the streets of Tabriz, people were lining up at shop to buy the fresh bread, a very common scene across Iran. I had to catch a train to Tehran in the evening, so I still had some time to see little bit more of Tabriz. I was very hungry, went to Haj Ali Chelokababi in Tabriz Bazaar for lunch, it's said to be very good and indeed it was very good.



**Lunch at Haj Ali Chelokababi, Tabriz**



After some more walking around the city and seeing Saat square, it was time to make a move to Tabriz railway station. Boarded the train to Tehran, after few stations 3 more people joined me in the compartment. Had some tea, some conversation and then went to sleep.



**Raja Train Tabriz to Tehran**



## Day 8 : Exploring Kashan



**Agha Bozorg Mosque, Kashan**

Early morning reached Tehran railway station, booked a Snapp taxi to reach Heritage hostel in Tehran to collect one of my luggage which I stored in the luggage room in the hostel. Said Salam to folks at the hostel and headed to Junoob bus terminal. Got into the bus to Kashan, reached Kashan in few hours.

Booked a Snapp taxi to reach Sana historical hostel in Kashan. I didn't had the reservation but fortunately got a very good room.



The hostel was very near to Agha Bozorg mosque. After taking some rest and hot shower I was ready to visit some of the places in Kashan. First visited the beautiful Agha Bozorg mosque.

Next headed for lunch at Mozaffari Traditional Restaurant, had some Fesenjan. Next went to see the beautiful Tabatabaei Historical House, Borujerdi House and Sultan Amir Ahmad Bathhouse.



**Tabatabaei House, Kashan**





## **An Alley in Kashan**

After taking some rest visited the beautiful Fin Garden in the evening and walked around the Kashan Bazaar.





**Fin Garden, Kashan**



## Day 9 : Exploring Isfahan



**Naqsh-e-Jahan Square, Isfahan**

Next morning went straight to the Kashan bus station to catch a bus to Isfahan. Waited for bus about an hour, after few hours of journey, reached Kaveh Bus terminal in Isfahan around afternoon. Booked a Snapp to reach Isfahan Heritage hostel.



After some time went out to see Isfahan, first I went to Azam Beryani for lunch. Ordered a Beryani but what I got served was surprising 😊, a fried meat served with bread, I was expecting meat and rice. But it was good and quite different.

Next I went to see the grand Naqsh-e-Jahan square, sipped ginger tea at the very colorful Azadegan Tea House in the bazaar.



**Shah Mosque, Naqsh-e-Jahan Square**



# Day 10 : More from Isfahan

I still had some time in Isfahan, so went to see Chehel Sotoon, Si-o-Se Pol, Jameh Mosque of Isfahan & Imam Ali Square.



**Chehel Sotoon, Isfahan**





**Si-o-Se Pol, Isfahan**





**Jameh Mosque, Isfahan**



Next headed to Kaveh bus terminal in Isfahan to catch the bus to Yazd. Reached Yazd bus station in night, it was raining in Yazd. Checked in Yazd Friendly Hotel, the tea was ready and the hotel owner insisted me many times to have it. Then went outside and had Shooli Soup.



**Jameh Mosque of Yazd at Night**



# Day 11 : Exploring Yazd



**Jameh Mosque, Yazd**

After having a very good breakfast, first visited the Jameh Mosque of Yazd, next walked to Amir Chakhmaq Square. I wanted to buy sweets from Haj Kalifeh Ali Rahbar (very famous in Yazd for sweets) but unfortunately I was running out of Iranian currency and my Iranian card also didn't had much money in it. And they refused to accept Euro/USD.





**Amir Chakhmaq Square, Yazd**

Next I went to see the beautiful Dowlat Abad Garden.





### **Dowlat Abad Garden, Yazd**

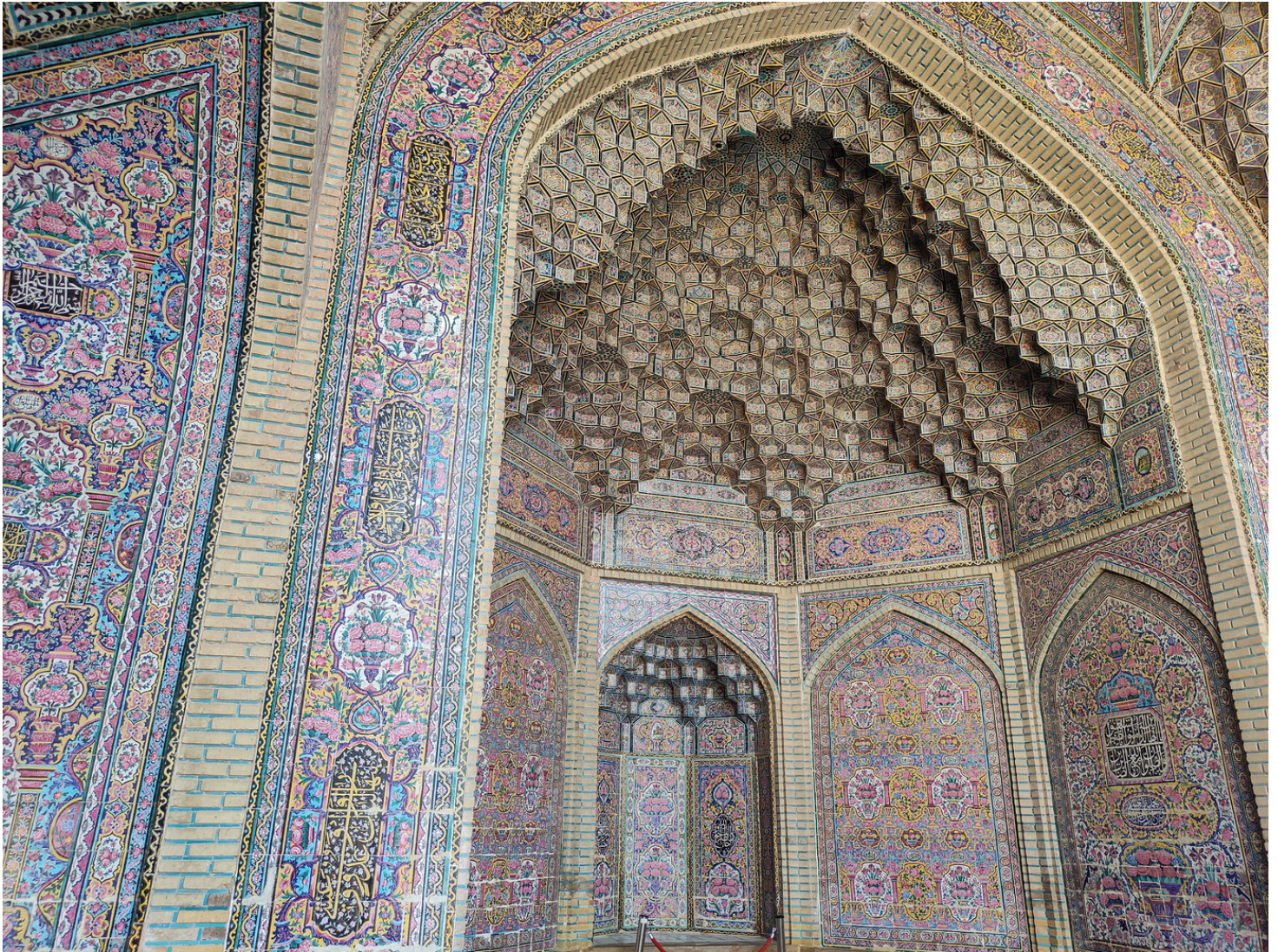
After spending some time at Dowlat Abad Garden, left for Yazd Bus station as I had to catch bus for Shiraz. Buses were running full, but after asking many times I did get a ticket to Shiraz.

Reached Karandish Bus station in Shiraz in night and the hotel around 11 PM, had some tea and went to sleep.



## Day 12 : Exploring Shiraz

Had a good sleep and was ready to see what Shiraz had to offer. First visited the Nasir al-Mulk Mosque also known as the Pink Mosque. Walked around the streets in Shiraz. I also had to exchange money, exchanged USD and Euro to Iranian Rial near Zand Street in Shiraz.



**Nasir-al-Mulk Mosque, Shiraz**





## **Karim Khan Citadel, Shiraz**

Booked a taxi so that I can visit Naqsh-e Rostam, Pasargadae & Persepolis. Started from Shiraz in afternoon, first visited Naqsh-e Rostam.





**Naqsh-e-Rostam, Shiraz**

Next saw the Pasargadae, and had Abgoosht (Dizi) for lunch followed by a tea before heading to Persepolis.





**Tomb of Cyrus, Pasargadae**

Visited the Persepolis, such old ruins, definitely it would have been a very big city in the past.





## **Persepolis**

Thanks to the wonderful driver, I enjoyed the whole ride. Reached Shiraz in evening and visited the beautiful Tomb of Hafez, before heading to Bandar Abbas.





## **Tomb of Hafez, Shiraz**

Reached Karandish Bus station in night and after waiting for some time boarded the bus to Bandar Abbas.



# Day 13 : Exploring Hormuz Island

Reached Bandar Abbas in morning, checked in a hotel. After getting ready, headed straight to Shahid Haqqani port in Bandar Abbas to catch a ferry to Hormuz Island.

I personally felt Bandar Abbas was little different from other parts of Iran. After 40 minutes of ferry ride in Persian Gulf, arrived at the Hormuz Island.



**Hormuz Island**





### **Beautiful domes of Majara Residence, Hormuz Island**

Saw the Hormuz Island on a bike, spent some time on the Red beach. It was very sunny and hot, walked bare foot on red beach but the sand was very hot.





## **Valley of Statues, Hormuz Island**

Even though it's a small island when compared to Qeshm but still it's quite different and worth a visit.





**Red Beach, Hormuz Island**

Next took the ferry from Hormuz to Bandar Abbas, had much needed lunch and carrot juice in Bandar Abbas. In night walked around the streets of Bandar Abbas and purchased a few things.



# Day 14 : Exploring Qeshm Island

This was my last day in Iran, plan was to visit the Qeshm Island by afternnon and take some rest and then go to Bandar Abbas airport to catch the flight to Dubai. So in morning got ready and headed straight to Shahid Haqqani port in Banadar Abbas to catch a ferry to Qeshm Island. Also bought a food parcel from a shop, for my breakfast.



**Qeshm Island**



After 40 minutes ferry ride in the Persian Gulf, arrived at Shahid Zakeri Port on Qeshm Island. On arrival I first had my breakfast and then met with a wonderful driver who showed me the Qeshm Island.

First visited the Chahkooch Canyon, and got a glimpse of Hara forest (the Mangrove forest on Qeshm Island).



**Chahkooch Canyon, Qeshm Island**





**Qeshm Island**





**Qeshm Island**





## **Qeshm Island**

Had fish in the lunch, the food was good, followed by 3-4 cup of tea, finally kadak tea with milk in Iran.





### **Last Lunch in Iran**

As I had to catch a flight to Dubai in evening, said good bye to Qeshm Island and took a ferry to reach Bandar Abbas. Packed my luggage, booked a Snapp and reached at Bandar Abbas airport, the flight from Bandar Abbas to Dubai just took one hour. Waited for few hours at Dubai airport for my next flight to Lucknow and after some waiting finally reached Lucknow.