


Iransaga	Country & History	Persian Literature	Contact Us	
	Arts & Crafts	Site Map	Visitor's Book	

## Some Places of Interest in Tehran

---

Tehran has been a capital for only two centuries, and has undergone constant reconstruction during that time. Today it is the product of decades of uncontrolled urban growth and as a result of this, the only traces of the country's long history are hidden behind its museum walls.

Tehran's most famous monument is probably the **Azadi Tower (Freedom Tower)**, which includes a cultural centre with a library, a museum and art galleries that display works by contemporary artists. The tower is a triumphal arch in white stone, standing 45 metres (148 feet) high, and composed of a large central block set on four splayed feet. Designed by a young Iranian architect, the tower was finished in 1971 for the celebrations of the 2,500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the monarchy. The tower is located to the west of Tehran, at the junction of the roads from the airport and Qazvin, and acts as a grandiose gateway to the capital.



**Azadi Tower and Square**

One of the first museums, the **Emarat-e Masudieh Museum**, was built during the Qajar period to cater for Nader Shah's Indian treasure, and is now part of the Ministry of Education. As excavations revealed more and more ancient objects, and the Persian armies continued to bring back treasures from neighbouring empires, the need for a national museum grew. **The National Museum of Iran**, sometimes called Muze-ye Iran-e Bastan (Museum of Ancient Iran) was eventually built between 1932 and 1937.

Today, there are several museums in Tehran, including:

- The **National Museum of Art** (a comprehensive collection of Iranian art and handicrafts)

- The **Museum of Modern Art** (exhibitions by contemporary Iranian and foreign artists)
- The **Museum of Decorative Arts** (a collection of craft products from the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries)
- The **Reza Abbasi Museum** (an astonishing collection of cultural objects dating back to the Neolithic times)
- The **Abgineh Museum** (prehistoric Glass and Ceramics)
- The **Persian Carpet Museum** (an excellent collection of hand woven Persian carpets and Kilim from all regions of Iran)
- The **National Jewels Museum** (one of the richest collections of Jewels in the world)

In south Tehran, the ravages of modernisation notwithstanding, the traditional fabric of the Islamic city survives. Mosques, bazaar, artisans' workshops and houses (typically a rectangle of rooms facing an inner courtyard) are set close together on narrow streets. The sense of community is strong and vibrant.

The area around the old royal quarter with the bazaar was designed by Shah Tahmasp in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Nothing is left of the citadel or *arg* but the site is now marked by the Golestan Palace and gardens, which was once the residence of the Qajar kings before being used by the Pahlavi dynasty, for special ceremonies, such as the coronation of the last Shah in 1967. The palace also houses the famous "Hall of Mirrors".



**Golestan Palace and Gardens**



**A view from inside Golestan Palace**

Its gardens provide a peaceful oasis in the heart of the city. One of the garden pavilions houses the **Ethnographical Museum** (Museum of the People's Traditions), which contains an interesting collection of everyday objects, from all regions of the country, from the Qajar period onward.

The Tehran bazaar, and Imam Khomeini Mosque (previously known as, Shah's Mosque) are situated just to the south of Golestan Palace. The construction of the

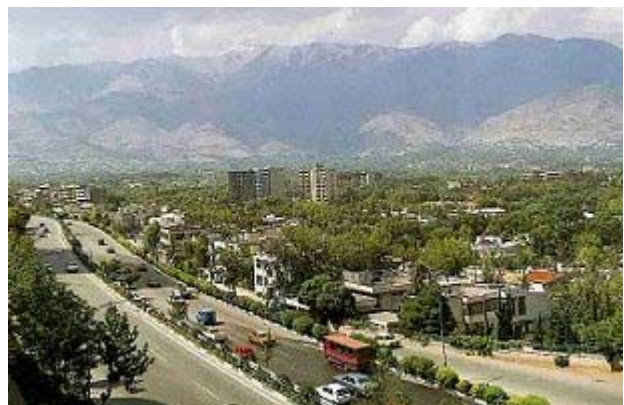
mosque begun in early 19<sup>th</sup> century and was finished in 1830, making it one of the oldest buildings in Tehran today.

The bazaar is traditionally the "Wall Street" of Tehran, and hence Iran, where prices of staple commodities are fixed. It acts as an interface between the town and the country, and has close links with the clergy. The bazaar is a city within a city, encompassing more than a dozen mosques, several guest-houses and banks. Each corridor specialises in a particular trade: copper, paper, gold, spice and carpets, among others. Sadly the bazaar is now gradually declining in size and importance.



**The Tehran bazaar**

Modern shops and boutiques line the wide streets of north Tehran, with high rise apartments for the middle class defining the skyline. The northern suburbs are set on the mountain slopes some 800 metres (2,625 feet) above the centre of town. The Shemiran suburb (once a village) has a select feel to it, far removed from the bustle of the city centre. It is here that one finds the gardens of some foreign embassies, private parks, the International Trade Fair compound and the Park of the Nation (*Park-e Mellat*), which has become a popular meeting place for young people.



**A view from north Tehran**

The old Pahlavi Royal residence, Sa'ad Abad is, located at the north end of Shemiran and it has now turned into a museum. Its eighteen palaces and residences, all dating from the 1930's, are scattered in a vast park of some 297 acres.

It is very easy to get into the Alborz mountains from the northern suburbs. The cable car to Mount Tochal (summit 3,933 metres, 12,900 feet), provides the simplest route. Several paths lead from its top station, including one to the summit. Other walks are possible from Darband (behind Sa'ad Abad), where numerous tea-houses line the picturesque streams that flow down the mountainside.



**TEHRAN**  
**Iran's Capital City**



**Top of Page**

---

*Copyright© 2000 K. Kianush, Art Arena*

---