

Isfahan - Iran

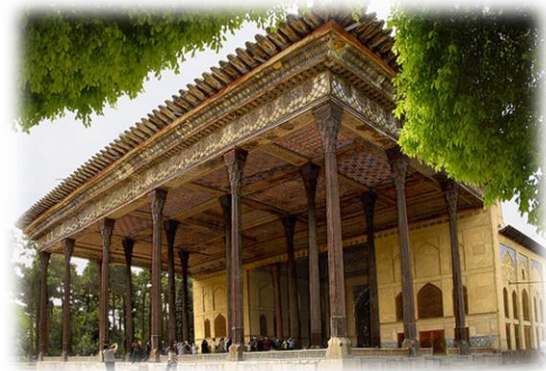
Isfahan, historically also rendered in English as Ispahan, Sepahan, Esfahan or Hispahan, is the capital of Isfahan Province in Iran situated in the central Iran, south of Tehran with a reputation as one of the greatest and most beautiful towns in the whole Asia. It's the principal tourist center of Iran and a masterpiece of Persian culture. Isfahan is city of gardens, bridges and Islamic art which date back to the 16th century. Isfahan attractions include beautiful bridges on the Zayandeh River such as Khaju Bridge, Wooden (Chubi) Bridge, 33 arches Bridge(Si-o-seh Pol); palaces such as Chehel Sotun (40 columns) Palace, Ali Qapu Palace, Hasht Behesht (8 paradises) Palace; mosques such as Jaame' Mosque, Sheikh Lotfallah Mosque, and other attractions such as Madreseh-ye Chahar Baq (a religious school), Naqsh-e Jahan Square, Birds Garden, and so on.



Historic sites in Isfahan City

1. Chehel Sotun (40 pillars) Palace

Several palaces were built in Isfahan, during Safavid era few of them have survived. Even those which have survived were severely damaged. The palace of Chehel Satan (palace of 40 pillars) is located in a vast beautiful garden. The original garden was larger than now. The present garden is 60000 square meters. The palace area is about 2125 square meters. There is a large pool in front of the palace. The first part of palace was built during Shah Abbas the great period. The beautiful frontal mirror ornamented Iwan (porch) was built during Shah Abbas the second era. It was used as a reception palace; foreign delegations and royal guests were entertained in this palace.



2. Naqsh-e Jahan Square

Naqsh-e Jahan square (and later called Imam square) is the second largest historical plaza in the world after Tiananmen square located in Beijing, including Four of the most majestic monuments of Isfahan City. Naqsh means "pattern" and Jahan means "world". This square is the most beautiful and magnificent sight of Isfahan. Several descriptions have been written about this square. The square is 510 meters long and 163 meters wide and its area is about 80000 square meters.



3. Ali Qapu Palace

At the west of Naghsh-e Jahan Square, just in front of Sheikh Lotfollah mosque, one of the most magnificent palaces of 17th century is located. Ali Qapu Palace is a well-known palace all over Iran. The first part of the palace was built in 1597. It was used as a residential palace. Shah Abbas the great, ordered to construct the palace on the site of palace and garden from the Timurid time. Shah Abbas's palace was a four floors with a veranda. Shah Abbas the second, expanded the palace and a music hall (room) was constructed on the top of the palace. The palace is about 38 meters high, the loftiest and tallest building in the 17th century. There are 52 rooms, but because a long restoration most of rooms are closed to visitors.



4. Madreseh-ye Chahar Baq (Chahar Baq School)

Chahār Bāq school (Madreseh-ye Chahār Bāq in Persian), also known as Shah school, is a 16-17th century cultural complex in Isfahan. The compound was built during Soltan Hossein, a Safavid king, to serve as a theological and clerical school to train those who were interested in such sciences. In order to finance the school, Soltan Hossein's mother had a large caravanserai built nearby, the income of which went to the foundation. The monumental portal from the main avenue of Shah Abbas leads directly into a domed octagonal vestibule. The dome and the greater part of the walls are covered in bright yellow bricks which give a feeling of lightness. The entrance gate decorated with gold facade and silver, and the tile-works inside the building are masterpieces of fine art and industry. The central court, with its pool and garden, are surrounded by arcades on two levels, each giving access to a student's room



5. The Monar Jonban

The Monar Jonban (Shaking Minarets), or Menar-e-jonban, is a monument located in Isfahan. This construction began in 14th century on top of the tomb of Amu Abdollah Karladani, a hermit buried here. Its notable feature is that if one of the minarets is shaken, the other minaret will shake as well. At first, a porch was erected as a shrine for Amu Abdollah Soqla and the brick minarets were constructed later, and are probably of Safavid dynasty era origin (15th-17th centuries). The porch is 10 metres (33 ft) high and 10 metres (33 ft) in width, the minarets are 7 metres (23 ft) taller and are 4 metres (13 ft) in circumference. The roof above the shrine contains some skilled brickwork. Because of the ratio between the height and width of the minarets and the width of the porch, if one minaret is shaken, the other will shake in unison. This example of coupled oscillation can be observed from ground level.



Bridges on Zayandeh River in Isfahan City

1. Si-o-Seh Pol (33 Arches Bridge)

Si-o-Seh Pol (which means 33 Bridges or the Bridge of 33 Arches), also called the Allah-Verdi Khan Bridge, is one of the eleven bridges of Isfahan. This is probably the most famous of Isfahan's bridges. The bridge connects central Chahar Bagh Avenue to the lower part of Chahar Bagh Avenue. It is made up of two rows of 33 arches, commissioned in 1602 by Shah Abbas I from his chancellor Allahverdi Khan Undiladze, an Iranian ethnic Georgian. The name, Si-o-Seh Pol, is derived from the Persian equivalent for 33 (Si-o-Seh). There is a larger base plank at the start of the bridge where the Zayandeh River flows under it, supporting a tea house. It is highly ranked as being one of the most famous examples of Safavid bridge design.



2. Khaju Bridge

Khaju Bridge is arguably the finest bridge in the province of Isfahan. It was built by the Persian Safavid king, Shah Abbas II around 1650 C.E., on the foundations of an older bridge. Serving as both a bridge, and a dam (or a weir), it links the Khaju quarter on the north bank with the Zoroastrian quarter across the Zayandeh River. Khaju Bridge has 24 arches and is 133 meters long and 12 meters wide. The pass way of the bridge is 7.5 meters wide, made of bricks and stones with 21 larger and 26 smaller inlet and outlet channels. The pieces of stone used in this bridge are over 2 meters long and the distance between every channel and the ceiling base is 21 meters. The existing inscriptions suggest that the bridge was repaired in 1873.



3. Chubi (Wooden) Bridge

Another bridge built on the Zayandeh River in Isfahan is Chubi (Wooden) Bridge also known as Daryacheh (Lake) Bridge or Sa'adat Abad Bridge. This bridge has been used as a special way to Haft Dast and Ayeneh Khaneh Palaces. This narrow bridge with a length of about 147 m is located between Si-o-Seh Pol (Allah-Verdi Khan Bridge) and Khaju Bridge. It was built in 1065 A.H. on the order of Shah Abbas II and now is located in Kamal Isma'il Avenue.



Mosques and places of pilgrimage in Isfahan City

1. Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque

A masterpiece of world's architecture was built during the reign of Shah Abbas the great. Sheikh Lotfollah was one of Shiite prominent, preachers and clergies who came from Jabal Amel in Lebanon to Isfahan. Shah Abbas supported him and Sheikh took up residence in Isfahan and the sheikh Lotfollah mosque was named after him. The mosque was used as a Theological school and also as a royal mosque. It was started to be built in 1602 and it was completed in 1619. This mosque is located on the great Naghsh-e Jahan Square and it is said it was used as a private mosque for Shah and royal family. The plan and layout of the mosque is different from other Iranian mosques.



2. Vank Cathedral

Vank Cathedral was one of the first churches to be established in Jolfa district, Isfahan City, by Armenian deportees settled by Shah Abbas I after the Ottoman War of 1603-1605. The varying fortunes and independence of this suburb across the Zayandeh River and its eclectic mix of European missionaries, mercenaries and travelers can be traced almost chronologically in the cathedral's combination of building styles and contrasts in its external and internal architectural treatment. Construction is believed to have begun in 1606, and completed with major alterations to design between 1655 and 1664 under the supervision of Archbishop David. Vank means "monastery" or "convent" in the Armenian language.



3. Saint Mary Church

Saint Mary Church is the second old church after Jacob Church or Saint James Church, in Isfahan. It was built by a trader called "Avdic Babakian" in 1613 AD, during Safavid period. The church has beautiful paintings on the walls. On the north and south walls there are two paintings, that is the work of a Venetian skilled artist, presented by Mr. Grak related to 300 hundred years ago. Because the church has been called Mary, women were more likely to go to church. In the past, groups of girls and woman from the Julfa neighborhood came to church on Wednesdays. On Wednesday before Easter, some came to church barefoot to take part in Mary's pleasure and happiness. In 1848 AD, the bell tower house, was built in the western part and above the church entrance, adjacent to the south side of the building, a chapel called "Stephanos" was built.



Gardens in Isfahan

2. Flowers Garden

Isfahan's Flower Garden is one of Iran's great green space projects which were completed in 1990s in Isfahan. The garden serves multiple purposes. It's a recreational, cultural, educational and research center. The buildings of the garden have Iranian traditional elements. There are different parts in the garden. The entrance pavilion including a building with the dimensions of 6x9 meters and a height of 6 m. At the ground floor, there's an information office. The whole landscape of the garden can be viewed from the deck of the building's first floor. The second floor includes a hall for showing movies and slides about various kinds of plants.



3. Natural History Museum (Teymour Hall)

Natural History Museum or Teymour hall is located on the south side of Ostandari Street and in the complex of Safavid government house. The date of this building's construction is not mentioned anywhere, but due to its name, the style of its architecture and its plaster-molding decoration, it belongs to Teymourian era. It has mentioned that this building is one of those buildings in Teymour Lang e ra. After his attack to Iran and his massacre, he ordered to build this elevated building next to Naghsh-e Jahan square according to his interest in art. And due to his command and the protection of Shahrokh Ebn-e Teymour this building was built. But according to some events which happened after a while, it seems that the founder of Teymour hall was one of the Teymour's grandchildren whose name was Rostam Ebn-e Omr Sheikh Ebn-e Teymour.



Gardens in Isfahan City

6. Birds Garden

Esfahan's Bird Garden was founded in 1996. The garden covers more than 50,000 square meters, most of which is enclosed by a net suspended high off the ground giving the 125 or so species of birds plenty of room to fly around freely whilst making sure that they don't escape their environs. It consists of parrots, budgies, cockatoos, ostriches, owls, pheasants, peacocks as well as the aquatic birds in the large pool such as pelicans, flamingos and storks and cranes all balancing on one leg and black and white swans paddling smoothly along in the clear water. Different parts of the garden include:

- Ponds
- Rock
- Glass Cages
- Iron Cages
- Forest Green Space

