



## PRACTICAL INFORMATION ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN

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### ***Tehran***

Tehran is situated between 1100m (Southern part of the city) and 1750m (North) altitude. It is a very large city with around 13 million inhabitants. North of the city are the Alborz mountains. The northern part of the city is the more affluent and more liberal part of the city. Tehran is a crowded city with lots of traffic. Travelling from one place to another in the city usually takes a lot of time. Keep 30 minutes between each meeting and avoid the traffic jams between 4-7pm.

### ***Time difference with Western Europe***

Time difference with Western Europe is usually 2,5 hours. Between late September and late October it is 1,5 hours. At some point in March it is 3,5 hours.

### ***Climate***

Tehran has 4 seasons. Summers are hot and dry, winters can be cold. Spring and fall are considered most pleasant with moderate temperatures.

### ***Money***

Local currency is the Rial. However, for counting often the toman is used (one zero less). Because of the previous financial sanctions it is still impossible to use a creditcard or use an ATM with foreign cards. **It is important to bring enough cash money with you when visiting Iran.** Euros and dollars can be exchanged without problems.

### ***Language***

Farsi is the main language. Arabic script is used and one writes from right to left. In the cities the well educated people (and there are many) speak English and/or French. Many Iranians studied abroad and they speak several languages.

### ***Local customs***

### ***Greetings***

Not everyone in Iran is comfortable with shaking hands with someone of the opposite sex as a form of greeting. In official and government settings it is even forbidden to do so. A verbal greeting is commonly accepted.

### ***Ta'rov***

Ta'rov is the Persian word for politeness and this is a very important concept in Iranian society. One never says what one thinks. When offered something, always decline first. Only after the third time it is acceptable to accept. To open doors for other people is customary (men for other men). Much of what is said, is said in ritualistic, polite formulas. One has to learn to read between the lines.

Although this concept may seem foreign to many Western Europeans – it is the opposite of the Western “directness”- adhering to these principles in formal and social interactions with Iranians will ensure smoother and more pleasant meetings and general relationships.

It is customary to exchange business cards although government officials often don't have one. A mobile number is usually written by hand on the card as a sign that one is accepted in the inner circle.

### ***Clothing***

Women HAVE TO obey the Islamic dress code. This means a long coat/jacket (just above the knee is fine) and a scarf that covers the hair. Easiest is to wear trousers with a long shirt and a long jacket. Arms and legs have to be covered. Colors depend on the occasion (for official government visits darker colors are advised). It is also best not to use too much make up.

Although it is forbidden for men to wear shorts in public, it is easier for them. For business/government appointments the dress code is the same as in Western Europe. Iranian men often don't wear a tie.

### ***Alcohol***

Drinking, buying and importing alcohols is prohibited. This includes drinking alcohol in hotels. At private parties people do drink.

Be careful with taking pictures, especially of the military and military installations. It is always advisable to ask first before taking pictures.

It is advisable not to show affection in public. While this applies to both heterosexual and homosexual couples, it is strictly forbidden for same-sex couples. Homosexuality is still considered a crime in Iran.

No appointment is certain until it actually takes place. To avoid frustration, it is advisable to take into account that visitor's programs are often changed at the last moment or cancelled altogether. Meetings in person are very important. One has to know each other before doing business. Important decisions are taken after continuous personal contact.

### ***Health***

- Everywhere in Tehran you can drink the water from the tap.
- The health system is good. Doctors all are highly educated.
- The air pollution is especially severe in the winter months. This can lead to mild to severe health complaints, depending on the sensitivity of the person. Common complaints are trouble breathing, burning eyes and a stuffy nose.
- In addition, the altitude (see point one) can lead to complaints such as light headedness, shortness of breath and nausea in the first days after arrival.

### ***Safety***

In general Tehran is a safe city. There is not a lot of petty crime. Make sure you always carry an ID. The secret services are very active. Assume that you are never 'alone', and that your telephone, and internet are tapped. Travelers have to assume that the Iranian authorities are always aware of their conversations with others. It is important to be aware of what you discuss and with whom, when speaking with Iranians.

### ***Traffic***

Traffic is busy and rules are not obeyed or enforced. People drive fast and often reckless, leading of high numbers of (deadly) traffic accidents each year.

### ***Holidays***

Iran follows the Iranian Calendar, starting on 21 March, the Iranian New Year (Nowrooz). Islamic holidays follow the Islamic calendar and change each year.

***Electricity***

Electricity in Iran is 220 volt, 50 HZ. Plugs are the same as the European plugs.

***Internet***

Internet is of a very low standard and the connection is unreliable. Many sites are blocked (facebook, twitter, bbcNews, LinkedIn).

***SIM Cards***

You can buy a sim card for your phone or IPADS on arrival at the airport.