

About Isfahan

Isfahan, which is located in the center of Iran, is a vibrant city stretching along a spectacular river with three UNESCO world heritage sites, ancient Islamic architecture friendly and hospitable locals, gorgeous bridges, and plenty of hidden locations to discover. Isfahan, the third biggest city in Iran, should be top of every traveler's list in Iran.



The history of Isfahan dates back to ancient times. During the Achaemenid Empire (648–330 BCE), Isfahan was an ethnically and religiously diverse and tolerant city. Isfahan was once one of the largest cities in the world, ranked among places like Athens or Rome and grander than London, Paris and Istanbul. Elegant bridges crossed its modest river, hundreds of domes and minarets punctuated the skyline and polo players dashed across the world's largest square. Isfahan flourished from the early 11th to the 18th century, and particularly during the Safavid dynasty in the 16th & 17th century when it became the capital of the old Persia for the second time.



Even today, the city retains much of its past glory. Many visitors believe Isfahan is the most beautiful city in Iran and one of the most beautiful in the world. It features numerous tree-lined boulevards and flower gardens, miles of beautiful parks along the Zayandeh Rood river; 1300 year-old covered bazaars, bridges,

palaces, mosques, and minarets. This led to the Persian proverb "Esfahān nesf-e- jahān ast" (Isfahan is half of the world).



Isfahan's Imam Square, also known as the Naghsh-e Jahan (meaning portrait of the world) Square, is one of the largest city squares in the world and an outstanding example of Iranian and Islamic architecture. Around the square sit a number of world-famous wonders of Islamic architecture. The Imam Square is designated by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site.



The Jameh Mosque of Isfahan, built nearly 1300 years ago, is one of the oldest mosques still standing in Iran, and is also a designated UNESCO World Heritage Site.

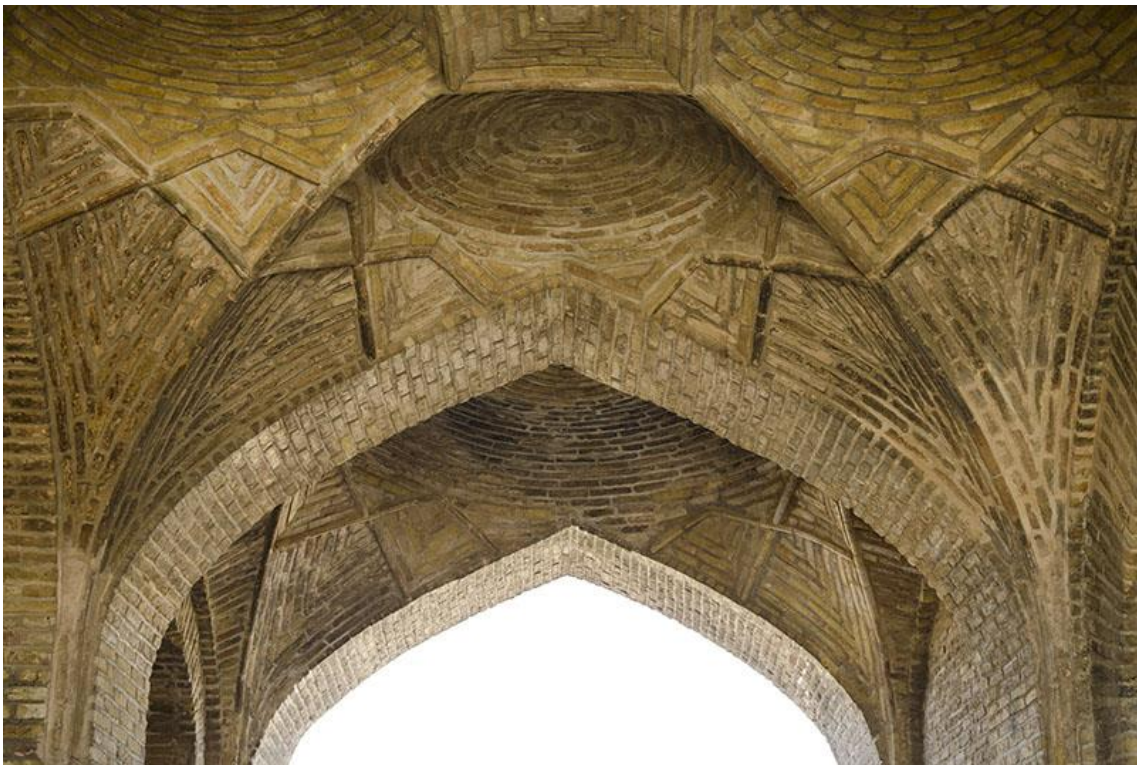


Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque is a famous masterpiece of Iranian architecture, standing on the eastern side of Naqsh-e Jahan Square, the first building of the four monuments of the square. The mixture of modest shape and rich interior and exterior tile ornaments made the mosque one of the most recognizable tourist sites of Isfahan.



One of the remaining monuments of the Safavid Era is Hasht Behesht Palace. Its brilliant architecture along with its design and decoration have made it a legendary palace. It has four different façades each one visible through a particular angle. There is also a garden around this structure from which not much has remained. However, a park has recently been established near the building with modern affiliations.

Zayanderud River Bridges



Khaju Bridge

The Khaju Bridge is one of the historical bridges on the Zayanderud, the largest river of the Iranian Plateau, in Isfahan, Iran. Serving as both a bridge and a weir, it links the Khaju quarter on the north bank with the Zoroastrian quarter across the Zayanderud. It also served a primary function as a building and a place for public meetings. It has been described as the city's finest bridge.

The mausoleum of Arthur Pope and his wife Phyllis Ackerman is situated nearby.

The Khaju Bridge was built around 1650, under the reign of Abbas II, the seventh Safavid king (shah) of Iran, on the foundations of an older bridge. The existing inscriptions suggest that the bridge was repaired in

1873. There is a pavilion located in the centre of the structure, inside which Abbas II would have once sat, admiring the view. Today, remnants of a stone seat are all that is left of the king's chair.

In the words of Arthur Pope and Jean Chardin, Khaju is "the culminating monument of Persian bridge architecture and one of the most interesting bridges extant ... where the whole has rhythm and dignity and combines in the happiest consistency, utility, beauty, and recreation.

The bridge has 23 arches and is 133 meters long and 12 meters wide. It was originally decorated with tilework and paintings and served as a teahouse. The pass way of the bridge is made of bricks and stones with 21 larger and 26 smaller inlet and outlet channels and is 7.5 meters wide. The pieces of stone used in the bridge are over 2 meters long, and the distance between every channel and the ceiling base is 21 meters.

There are several sluice gates under the archways, through which the water flow of the Zayanderud is regulated. When the sluice gates are closed, the water level behind the bridge is raised to facilitate the irrigation of the many gardens along the river upstream of the bridge. On the upper level of the bridge, the main central aisle was utilized by horses and carts, and the vaulted paths on either side by pedestrians. Octagonal pavilions in the centre of the bridge on both the down and the upstream sides provide vantage points for the remarkable views. The lower level of the bridge may be accessed by pedestrians and remains a popular shady place for relaxing.

Iranian architects have raised concerns about the damage inflicted on the bridge during recent "improvement program" renovations, citing, among other problems, the destruction of the original stepped base of the bridge, the alterations made to the riverbed, and the removal of the Safavid inscribed stone blocks from the bridge.



Siosepol Bridge

The Allahverdi Khan Bridge, popularly known as Si-o-se-pol, literally the bridge of 'thirty-three spans' is the largest of the eleven historical bridges on the Zayanderud, the largest river of the Iranian Plateau, in Isfahan, Iran.

The bridge was built in the early 17th century to serve as both a bridge and a dam. It is a popular recreational gathering place and is one of the most famous examples of Iran's Safavid architecture.

Si-o-se-pol was built between 1599 and 1602, under the reign of Abbas I, the fifth Safavid king (shah) of Iran. It was constructed under the supervision of Allahverdi Khan Undiladze, the commander-in-chief of the armies, who was of Georgian origin and was also named after him. The bridge served particularly as a

connection between the mansions of the elite, as well as a link to the city's vital Armenian neighbourhood of New Julfa.

The bridge has a total length of 297.76 metres (976.9 ft) and a total width of 14.75 metres (48.4 ft). It is a vaulted arch bridge consisting of two superimposed rows of 33 arches, from whence its popular name of Si-o-se-pol comes, and is made of stone. The longest span is about 5.60 metres (18.4 ft). The interior of Si-o-se-pol was originally decorated with paintings, which were often described by travellers as erotic.

There is a larger base plank at the start of the bridge, under which the Zayanderud flows, supporting a tea house, which is nowadays abandoned.

Shahrestan Bridge

The Shahrestan bridge is the oldest bridge on the Zayandeh River in Iran. The foundations date back to the Sasanian era (3rd to 7th century C.E.), but the top was renovated twice, first in the 10th century by the Buyids, then during the 11th century during the Seljuk period. Nevertheless, the architectural style is entirely Sassanian.

The bridge consists of two parabolas. The vertical parabola ensures that the middle of the bridge is its highest point. The horizontal parabola produces a bend to the west, strengthening it against the flow of the river. The bridge is 107.8 metres long and an average of 5.2 metres wide. It has two tiers of pointed arches, thirteen large ones spanning the river itself, and eight smaller ones that nest between them. The purpose of the latter is to quicken the flow of water during floods, taking pressure off the structure. The Zayandeh River has recently been diverted about 100 meters away from the bridge towards the south, leaving an artificial lake around the bridge to protect it from further damage.

Choobi Bridge

Joui Bridge also called the Choobi Bridge, is a bridge in Isfahan, Iran. It was built in 1665, during the Safavid era.

The Joui Bridge is located between Khaju and Ferdowsi bridges. It is 147 meters long and 4 meters wide, with 21 arches. It was built during the reign of Shah Abbas II to irrigate and connect the king's gardens on both sides of the river. The bridge and the two parlours within were for the exclusive use of the shah and his courtiers. Nowadays the parlours are being used as tea houses.

Marnan Bridge

Marnan Bridge is a historical bridge in Isfahan, Iran. The current structure of the bridge dates back to the Safavid era, but its foundations are older and possibly as old as the Shahrestan bridge, which dates back to the Sasanian era.

In addition to its historical roots, Isfahan is also one of the major educational, cultural, industrial and agricultural centers of Iran. The people of Isfahan are well known for their intellect, adherence to religious values, tenacity, and their high impact within the realm of Iranian art, culture and politics. Different religious minorities, including Christians, Zoroastrians, and Jews have enjoyed a peaceful coexistence with the Muslim population for centuries.

Geography and climate:

The city is located at an altitude of 1590 meters above sea level in the lush plain of the Zayanderud River, at the foothills of the Zagros mountain range. The nearest mountain is Mount Soffeh (Kuh-e Soffeh) which is situated just south of Isfahan. No geological obstacles exist within 90 km north of Isfahan, allowing cool northern winds to blow from this direction. Isfahan has a seasonal climate. It remains hot during the summer with maximum temperature typically around 35 °C (95 °F). However, with low humidity and moderate temperatures at night, the climate can be very pleasant. During the winter, days are mild while nights can be very cold. Snow has occurred at least once every winter.

Transportation:

By plane: There are daily flights from Isfahan International Airport to main cities in Iran and a number of international destinations, currently including, Dubai, Kuwait, Istanbul, Najaf and there are planned flight to other international destinations including Vienna.

By car: Isfahan is well-served by highways. There are good routes to the capital Tehran, Kashan, Shiraz, Yazd and Ahvaz.

By bus: This city is well connected to most parts of Iran by bus. There are multiple bus terminals in Isfahan serving Northern, Southern, Western and Eastern parts of the country. There are buses to/from Tehran every 15 minutes and frequent buses to main cities in the country. There is a direct bus service to the Imam Khomeini International Airport. [View full-screen map for Isfahan](#)

By bus: It is easy to get around Isfahan by bus at a very reasonable cost. You can buy multi-journey contactless cards at certain bus stop booths or pay the driver directly. Note that there are separate men (front) and women (rear) sections on each bus.

By Metro: The first phase of Line 1 was opened in October 2015 and other phases are planned to open soon.



References:

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