



Iran

The land of ancient Persia, where Persepolis, blue-tiled mosques, saffron rice and the poems of Hafez are part of everyday life.

AT A GLANCE

Facts to know

CAPITAL

Tehran

POPULATION

About 92 million (2025 estimate)

OFFICIAL LANGUAGE

Persian (Farsi), as set out in the constitution. Azerbaijani, Kurdish, Luri, Baluchi, Arabic and other languages are also spoken

CURRENCY

Iranian rial (IRR). Prices are often given in toman: 1 toman = 10 rials. In 2025 parliament approved a plan to drop four zeros from the rial over several years

AREA

About 1,648,000 km², the 17th-largest country in the world

GOVERNMENT

Islamic republic, with a Supreme Leader as head of state and an elected president and parliament

HIGHEST MOUNTAIN

Mount Damavand, 5,610 m, a dormant volcano in the Alborz range northeast of Tehran

LONGEST RIVER

The Karun, about 950 km, which is also the only river in Iran that boats can navigate

NEIGHBOURS

Turkey, Armenia, Azerbaijan (including its Nakhchivan exclave), Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iraq. Across the Caspian Sea: Russia and Kazakhstan. Across the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman: Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Oman

DRIVES ON THE

Right

CALLING CODE

+98

A 45-minute trip to Iran

Everything you need is in this pack. No preparation beyond printing. Adapt the timing to your group.

- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| 0 to 5 min | Welcome. Show the map page and find Iran together. Ask: who has been there, or knows someone from there? |
| 5 to 15 min | Read the facts at a glance, then three moments from the story:
1250 BC: Chogha Zanbil ziggurat is built; 1219: The Mongol invasions begin; 1980: The Iran-Iraq War begins. |
| 15 to 25 min | At the table: talk about Chelow kabab and Ghormeh sabzi. Idea: bring a small taste (bread, cheese, fruit, tea) if your kitchen can help. |
| 25 to 30 min | Say it like a local: practise "Salâm" (Hello), "Sobh bekheyr" (Good morning), "Hâletun chetore?" (How are you?). Everyone says them together. |
| 30 to 40 min | Quiz: read the questions aloud, or play the big-screen version at https://worldstroll.com/countries/iran/group . No scores needed. |
| 40 to 45 min | Talk about it (questions page), then stamp or sign everyone's passport page. |

You will need

- This printed pack (one per table, or one each)
- Pens for the quiz
- Optional: a world map or globe, a small tasting, music from the country

Iran and its cities



- Tehran (Tehran Province, at the foot of the Alborz mountains): Golestan Palace, The Grand Bazaar, The Azadi Tower, The Alborz mountains and Mount Damavand nearby
- Mashhad (Razavi Khorasan Province, in the northeast): The Imam Reza Shrine, Saffron from the surrounding region, The Tomb of Ferdowsi at Tus
- Isfahan (Isfahan Province, in the centre): Naqsh-e Jahan Square, Si-o-se-pol and the other old bridges, Gaz, a nougat with pistachios, Handicrafts such as enamel and printed cloth
- Shiraz (Fars Province, in the south): The Tomb of Hafez, The Nasir-ol-Molk (Pink) Mosque, Persian gardens such as Eram, Faloodah Shirazi
- Tabriz (East Azerbaijan Province, in the northwest): The Historic Bazaar, a UNESCO site, Tabriz carpets, The Blue Mosque of Tabriz, Lake Urmia to the west
- Yazd (Yazd Province, in the central desert): Windcatchers (badgirs), The Jameh Mosque, Zoroastrian fire temple, Qanats, underground water channels

- Kerman (Kerman Province, in the southeast): Pistachios, The Ganjali Khan complex, Kerman carpets, Trips to the Lut Desert
- Kashan (Isfahan Province, in the centre): The Fin Garden, Historic houses such as the Tabatabaei House, Rosewater from nearby Qamsar, Carpets and silk
- Rasht (Gilan Province, near the Caspian Sea): Gilani cooking, Rice fields and tea gardens, The mountain village of Masuleh nearby
- Hamadan (Hamadan Province, in the west): Hegmataneh, ancient Ecbatana, The Tomb of Avicenna, Mount Alvand
- Bandar Abbas (Hormozgan Province, on the Persian Gulf): The Strait of Hormuz, Boats to Hormuz and Qeshm islands, Spicy fish dishes of the south

A short history of Iran

Iran's history is often told as a chain of great empires: the Elamites, the Medes, the Achaemenid Persians of Cyrus and Darius, the Parthians and the Sasanians. After the Arab conquest in the 7th century Iran became Muslim, but kept its own language, and Persian poetry, painting and architecture flourished under many dynasties. The Safavids made Shia Islam the state religion in 1501, the Qajars moved the capital to Tehran, and the 20th century brought a constitution, the Pahlavi shahs and, in 1979, the Islamic Republic.

1250 BC Chogha Zanbil ziggurat is built

Around 1250 BC the Elamite king Untash-Napirisha built a great stepped temple, a ziggurat, near Susa in today's Khuzestan. It is one of the few ziggurats outside Mesopotamia and among the best preserved anywhere. In 1979 it became one of Iran's first three sites on the UNESCO World Heritage List, together with Persepolis and Naqsh-e Rostam.

550 BC Cyrus the Great founds the Persian Empire

In 550 BC Cyrus II, a king from Persis in the southwest, defeated the Medes and founded the Achaemenid Empire. He went on to conquer Lydia in Anatolia and Babylon, building the largest empire the world had yet seen. His capital was Pasargadae, where his tomb still stands.

539 BC Cyrus takes Babylon

In 539 BC Cyrus entered Babylon. A clay cylinder written in his name, the Cyrus Cylinder, praises his rule and tells how he allowed deported peoples to return home and rebuild their temples. The cylinder was found in Babylon in 1879 and is now in the British Museum in London.

518 BC Darius begins Persepolis

Around 518 BC Darius the Great began building Persepolis, a ceremonial capital on a great stone terrace in Fars. His son Xerxes and later kings added halls and palaces. Stone reliefs on the staircases show people from all over the empire bringing gifts to the king.

330 BC Alexander burns Persepolis

Alexander the Great of Macedon defeated the last Achaemenid king, Darius III, and in 330 BC his army took Persepolis. Soon afterwards its

palaces burned. Ancient writers disagree about whether the fire was revenge for the Persian burning of Athens or an accident after a feast.

AD 224 The Sasanian Empire begins

In 224 Ardashir I defeated the last Parthian king and founded the Sasanian Empire, which called itself Eranshahr, the realm of the Iranians. For four centuries it was the great rival of Rome and Byzantium, and Zoroastrianism was its state religion.

AD 651 The Arab conquest ends Sasanian rule

From 633 the armies of the new Muslim caliphate invaded the Sasanian Empire. The last Sasanian king, Yazdegerd III, was killed in 651. Over the following centuries most Iranians became Muslim, while Persian survived as the everyday language and later returned as a great literary language.

1010 Ferdowsi completes the Shahnameh

In 1010 the poet Ferdowsi finished the Shahnameh, the Book of Kings, after more than 30 years of work. Its roughly 50,000 couplets tell the story of Iran from the creation of the world to the Arab conquest, and it helped keep the Persian language alive.

1219 The Mongol invasions begin

In 1219 the armies of Genghis Khan invaded the Khwarazmian Empire, which ruled much of Iran. Cities such as Nishapur were destroyed and many people were killed. Later, Mongol rulers of the Ilkhanate settled in Iran and became patrons of Persian art and learning.

1501 The Safavids unite Iran

In 1501 Ismail I was crowned shah in Tabriz and founded the Safavid dynasty. He made Twelver Shia Islam the official religion, one of the most important turning points in the history of Islam, and the Safavids ruled a united Iran for more than two centuries.

1598 Isfahan becomes the capital

In 1598 Shah Abbas the Great moved his capital from Qazvin to Isfahan and rebuilt it with a vast square, grand mosques, palaces, gardens and bridges. Isfahan became one of the largest cities of its time, and Iranians still say 'Esfahan nesf-e jahan': Isfahan is half the world.

1786

Tehran becomes the capital

In 1786 Agha Mohammad Khan, founder of the Qajar dynasty, made the small town of Tehran his capital. It has been the capital ever since, and it has grown into a city of about 9 million people.

1906

The first constitution and parliament

The Constitutional Revolution of 1905 to 1911 forced the Qajar shah to accept a constitution. In 1906 Iran got its first elected parliament, the Majles, one of the first in the Muslim world.

1935

Persia asks to be called Iran

In 1935 Reza Shah Pahlavi asked foreign governments to use the name Iran, the country's own name, instead of Persia in official letters. In 1959 his son said that both names could be used.

1979

The Islamic Republic is proclaimed

Mass protests in 1978 forced the last shah, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, to leave the country in January 1979, ending Iran's monarchy. After a referendum, the Islamic Republic was proclaimed on 1 April 1979, led by the cleric Ruhollah Khomeini.

1980

The Iran-Iraq War begins

In September 1980 Iraq invaded Iran. The war lasted eight years and cost around half a million lives before both sides accepted a UN ceasefire in August 1988. Iranians call it the Sacred Defence.

What people eat in Iran

Iranian cooking is built around rice, fresh herbs, and a gentle balance of sweet and sour from fruits such as pomegranates, barberries, plums and dried limes, with saffron for colour and scent. Breakfast is usually flatbread with white cheese, walnuts, herbs, butter, jam or honey, and sweet black tea. Lunch has traditionally been the main meal: a mound of fluffy rice (chelow or polo) with a slow-cooked stew called khoresh, a plate of fresh herbs, yoghurt, pickles and a glass of doogh. The crispy rice from the bottom of the pot, tahdig, is the prize everyone wants. Tea follows every meal, and fruit is always offered to guests.

Chelow kabab)

All of Iran; probably created in the Qajar era

Buttery steamed rice (chelow) with a saffron top, served with kebabs: kabab koobideh, made from minced lamb and grated onion pressed onto wide flat skewers, or kabab barg, thin strips of marinated fillet. It comes with grilled tomatoes, raw onion, a pat of butter, sumac to sprinkle and a glass of doogh.

Ghormeh sabzi)

All of Iran

A deep green stew of lamb or beef slow-cooked with a big mountain of fried herbs (parsley, coriander, chives and fenugreek), red kidney beans and whole dried limes, which give it a sour, earthy taste. It is served over rice and is often called the national dish.

Fesenjan)

All of Iran; said to go back to Sasanian times

A rich, dark brown stew of chicken or duck (sometimes meatballs) cooked slowly with ground walnuts and pomegranate molasses, which make it sweet and sour at the same time. It is a dish for guests and celebrations, served with rice.

Tahdig)

All of Iran

The golden, crispy crust of rice that forms at the bottom of the pot. Cooks line the pot with oil or butter and often with saffron rice, yoghurt rice, flatbread or thin potato slices, then turn the rice out so the crust sits on top. The name means 'bottom of the pot'.

Zereshk polo)

All of Iran

White and saffron rice scattered with tiny, tart red barberries fried in butter with a little sugar, usually served with saffron chicken. With its jewel colours it is a favourite at weddings and gatherings.

Sabzi polo ba mahi)

All of Iran, especially the Caspian coast

Rice steamed with lots of chopped fresh herbs, such as dill, coriander, parsley and chives, served with fried or smoked fish. It is the traditional lunch on Nowruz, the Persian New Year, when the fresh green herbs suit the start of spring.

Ash reshteh)

All of Iran

A thick soup of noodles, beans, chickpeas, lentils and plenty of herbs, topped with kashk (a tangy dried whey), fried onions, garlic and dried mint fried in oil. It is a warming winter dish and is often cooked in big pots to share.

Abgoosht (dizi))

All of Iran; a classic of Tehran workers' cafés

A hearty lamb stew with chickpeas, white beans, potatoes and tomato, cooked slowly in a stoneware pot called a dizi. You pour the broth over torn bread and eat it first, then mash the meat and vegetables into a paste called goosht-e koobideh and eat it with bread, herbs and pickles.

Kashk-e bademjan)

All of Iran

A warm dip of fried aubergine mashed with garlic, onions and kashk, a tangy dried whey, and topped with fried mint, crispy onions, walnuts and a swirl of saffron. It is eaten with flatbread.

Mirza ghasemi)

Gilan province, on the Caspian coast

Smoky grilled aubergines chopped and cooked with lots of garlic, tomatoes and eggs until thick. It comes from Gilan in the green, rainy north and is eaten with bread or rice.

Kuku sabzi)

All of Iran

A thick, bright green herb frittata made with more herbs than egg: parsley, coriander, dill and chives, often with walnuts and barberries. It is served warm or cold, in wedges, with bread and yoghurt, and is a favourite at Nowruz.

Salad Shirazi)

Shiraz, in the south

A fresh chopped salad of cucumber, tomato and onion with dried mint, dressed with lime juice or verjuice (sour grape juice) and a little oil. It is served with rice and kebabs, and some people spoon it over their rice.

Sholeh zard)

All of Iran

A golden saffron rice pudding scented with rosewater and cardamom, topped with cinnamon, almonds and pistachios, often in pretty patterns. It is made in huge pots for religious occasions and handed out to neighbours, and it is also eaten to break the fast in Ramadan.

Faloodeh)

Shiraz, and now all of Iran

A cold dessert of thin, springy starch noodles in a half-frozen syrup of sugar and rosewater, served with a squeeze of lime juice and sometimes sour cherry syrup. Ice cream shops often serve it next to saffron ice cream.

Sangak)

All of Iran

A long, bubbly wholewheat flatbread baked on a bed of small hot pebbles in a big oven, which leaves dimples in the dough. Its name means 'little stone' or pebble. People queue at the bakery to buy it hot for breakfast or to eat with abgoosht.

Doogh)

All of Iran

A cold, salty drink of yoghurt mixed with water, flavoured with dried mint and sometimes made fizzy. It is the classic drink with chelow kabab and helps on hot days.

GOOD MANNERS

At the table

- Taarof, a ritual of polite offers and refusals, shapes every meal. A host will press you to take more food, and it is polite to refuse once or twice before accepting. Hosts may also refuse your offer to help; ask again if you mean it.
- In many homes, especially in the countryside and at big family meals, food is served on a cloth called a sofreh spread on the floor. Take off your shoes at the door, sit cross-legged or with your legs tucked away, and never step on the sofreh.

- Iranians usually eat with a spoon in the right hand and a fork in the left, using the fork to push rice onto the spoon. Knives are rarely needed.
- Tea is the first thing offered to a guest and comes again after the meal. Many people hold a sugar cube in their mouth and drink the tea through it.
- Before or during a meal people say 'nush-e jan', may it nourish your soul, and afterwards guests thank the cook with 'dast-e shoma dard nakone', may your hand not hurt.

Kashk-e bademjan

A warm dip of fried aubergine mashed with garlic, onions and kashk, a tangy dried whey, and topped with fried mint, crispy onions, walnuts and a swirl of saffron. It is eaten with flatbread.

Ingredients

- 3 medium aubergines (about 1 kg)
- 2 onions, thinly sliced
- 4 garlic cloves, crushed
- 150 ml kashk (from a Middle Eastern shop), or 150 g thick Greek yoghurt with a pinch of salt
- 1 tbsp dried mint
- 1/2 tsp turmeric
- A pinch of saffron threads soaked in 2 tbsp hot water
- 30 g walnuts, roughly chopped
- 5 to 6 tbsp vegetable oil, salt and black pepper

Method

1. Peel the aubergines and cut them into thick slices. Salt them lightly, leave for 20 minutes, then pat dry.
2. Fry the onions in 3 tbsp oil until deep golden and crisp. Lift half out and keep it for the topping.
3. Fry the aubergine slices in the remaining oil until soft and golden on both sides.
4. Add the aubergine, garlic and turmeric to the pan with the onions, add 100 ml water and cook gently for 10 minutes, mashing with a fork.
5. Stir in most of the kashk (keep a spoonful), season with pepper and heat through for 2 minutes. Taste before adding salt, as kashk is salty.
6. In a small pan, warm 1 tbsp oil, take it off the heat and stir in the dried mint for a few seconds.
7. Spread the dip on a plate, top with the kept kashk, the saffron water, crispy onions, mint oil and walnuts. Serve warm with flatbread.

Mirza ghasemi

Smoky grilled aubergines chopped and cooked with lots of garlic, tomatoes and eggs until thick. It comes from Gilan in the green, rainy north and is eaten with bread or rice.

Ingredients

- 3 medium aubergines
- 6 garlic cloves, finely chopped
- 3 ripe tomatoes, peeled and chopped
- 3 eggs
- 1/2 tsp turmeric
- 3 tbsp vegetable oil or butter
- Salt and black pepper
- Flatbread or rice to serve

Method

1. Grill the whole aubergines over a gas flame, on a barbecue or under a very hot grill, turning, until the skin is black and the inside soft (about 20 minutes).
2. When cool enough to handle, peel off the skin and chop the flesh finely.
3. Fry the garlic gently in the oil for 1 minute, add the turmeric, then the tomatoes, and cook for 5 minutes until soft.
4. Add the aubergine, season with salt and pepper, and cook for 10 minutes, stirring now and then.
5. Make a well in the middle, break in the eggs, stir them until they begin to set, then mix them through and cook until the eggs are completely set, with no runny egg left.
6. Serve warm with flatbread or rice.

Kuku sabzi

A thick, bright green herb frittata made with more herbs than egg: parsley, coriander, dill and chives, often with walnuts and barberries. It is served warm or cold, in wedges, with bread and yoghurt, and is a favourite at Nowruz.

Ingredients

- 6 eggs
- 1 large bunch each of parsley, coriander and dill (about 250 g of herbs in total), finely chopped
- 6 spring onions or a bunch of chives, finely chopped
- 1 tbsp dried fenugreek leaves (optional)
- 40 g walnuts, chopped
- 1 tbsp dried barberries or cranberries (optional)
- 1 tsp baking powder
- 1/2 tsp turmeric
- 4 tbsp vegetable oil, salt and black pepper

Method

1. Heat the oven to 180 °C. Pour the oil into a 22 cm ovenproof dish and put it in the oven to heat.
2. Beat the eggs in a large bowl with the baking powder, turmeric, 1 tsp salt and some pepper.
3. Stir in the herbs, spring onions, fenugreek, walnuts and barberries. The mixture should look much greener than yellow.
4. Carefully pour the mixture into the hot oiled dish and smooth the top.
5. Bake for 30 to 35 minutes, until firm in the middle and golden at the edges. A knife pushed into the centre should come out clean, with no liquid egg.
6. Cut into wedges and serve warm or cold with bread, yoghurt and a salad.

Salad Shirazi

A fresh chopped salad of cucumber, tomato and onion with dried mint, dressed with lime juice or verjuice (sour grape juice) and a little oil. It is served with rice and kebabs, and some people spoon it over their rice.

Ingredients

- 2 cucumbers
- 3 firm tomatoes
- 1 small red onion
- 1 tbsp dried mint
- Juice of 2 limes, or 4 tbsp verjuice
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- Salt and black pepper

Method

1. Cut the cucumbers, tomatoes and onion into very small, even cubes, about 5 mm.
2. Put them in a bowl and sprinkle over the dried mint, rubbing it between your fingers.
3. Whisk the lime juice or verjuice with the oil, 1/2 tsp salt and some pepper.
4. Pour the dressing over the salad and mix gently.
5. Leave for 10 minutes so the flavours come together, then serve cold with rice, kebabs or bread.

Sholeh zard

A golden saffron rice pudding scented with rosewater and cardamom, topped with cinnamon, almonds and pistachios, often in pretty patterns. It is made in huge pots for religious occasions and handed out to neighbours, and it is also eaten to break the fast in Ramadan.

Ingredients

- 200 g short-grain rice, rinsed and soaked for 1 hour
- 1.5 litres water
- 250 g sugar
- 1/4 tsp saffron threads, ground and soaked in 3 tbsp hot water
- 4 tbsp rosewater
- 40 g butter
- 1/2 tsp ground cardamom
- 2 tbsp slivered almonds
- Ground cinnamon and chopped pistachios to decorate

Method

1. Drain the rice and put it in a large pot with the water. Bring to the boil, then simmer, stirring often, for about 40 minutes until the rice is very soft and the mixture thick.
2. Stir in the sugar and cook for 15 minutes more, stirring so it does not stick.
3. Add the saffron water, butter, cardamom and almonds and cook gently for 20 minutes, until thick and glossy.
4. Stir in the rosewater and cook for 5 more minutes.
5. Pour into a serving dish or small bowls and leave to cool and set.
6. Decorate with lines of cinnamon and chopped pistachios. Serve cold or at room temperature.

Useful phrases

Salâm

sa-LAAM · Hello

Sobh bekheyr

SOBH be-KHEYR · Good morning

Hâletun chetore?

haa-le-TOON che-to-REH · How are you?

Khubam, mersi

KHOO-bam, mer-SEE · I'm fine, thanks

Esmetun chie?

es-me-TOON CHEE-yeh · What is your name?

Khoshbakhtam

khosh-bakh-TAM · Pleased to meet you

Bebakhshid

be-bakh-SHEED · Excuse me, sorry

Kheyli mamnun

KHEY-lee mam-NOON · Thank you very much

Khâhesh mikonam

khaa-HESH mee-ko-NAM · You're welcome

In chande?

EEN chan-DEH · How much is this?

Kheyli gerune

KHEY-lee ge-roo-NEH · It's too expensive

Dastshuyi kojâst?

dast-shoo-EE ko-JAAST · Where is the toilet?

Fârsi balad nistam

faar-SEE ba-LAD NEES-tam · I don't speak Persian

Engelisi balad-id?

en-ge-LEE-see ba-LA-deed · Do you speak English?

Kheyli khoshmaze bud

KHEY-lee khosh-ma-ZEH bood · It was very tasty

Nush-e jân

NOO-she JAAN · Enjoy your meal

Dast-e shomâ dard nakone

DAS-te sho-MAA dard na-ko-NEH · Thank you (literally 'may your hand not hurt')

Khodâhâfez

kho-daa-haa-FEZ · Goodbye

Things you might not know

1. Nowruz, the Persian New Year, begins at the exact moment of the spring equinox in March. Iran's official calendar starts its year then too: the year 1405 began in March 2026.
2. On Yalda Night, the longest night of the year in December, families stay up late eating pomegranates, watermelon and nuts and reading poems by Hafez.
3. Iran grows most of the world's saffron: 85 to 90 percent, according to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (as of November 2025). Most of it comes from the provinces of Razavi Khorasan and South Khorasan, in the east.
4. Qanats, underground channels that carry water from the mountains to desert towns, were developed in ancient Iran about 3,000 years ago. Some are still in use, and eleven of them form a UNESCO World Heritage Site.
5. Yazd is called the City of Windcatchers. Its tall towers, badgirs, catch the breeze and send it down into the houses, cooling them without electricity.
6. Satellites have measured the sand of the Lut Desert at 70.7 °C, one of the hottest ground temperatures ever recorded on Earth.
7. Ferdowsi's Shahnameh, the national epic, has about 50,000 couplets and took him more than 30 years to write. It is one of the longest poems ever written by one person.
8. Polo grew out of chovgan, a horseback game played in ancient Persia. In Isfahan the Safavid shahs watched polo matches in Naqsh-e Jahan Square from the balcony of the Ali Qapu palace.
9. As of September 2026, Iran has 30 UNESCO World Heritage Sites, from Persepolis and the Lut Desert to Alamut Castle, added in 2026.
10. The English word 'bazaar' comes from the Persian 'bâzâr', market, and 'paradise' goes back to an old Persian word for a walled garden.
11. Mount Damavand, 5,610 m, is the highest mountain in Iran and the highest volcano in Asia. It has a special place in Persian myths and legends.
12. Taarof is the Iranian art of polite offers and refusals. A shopkeeper or taxi driver may say 'it's not worthy of you' and wave away payment; it is

courtesy, and you should insist on paying.

- 13.** In 2024 Iran, the United States and Turkey together grew 87 percent of the world's pistachios, and many of Iran's come from Kerman province.

TALK ABOUT IT

Questions for the group

- Have you ever been to Iran, or has someone in your family? What do you remember?
- Have you ever tasted Chelow kabab or Ghormeh sabzi? What is a dish you remember from a trip?
- The Islamic Republic is proclaimed (1979). Do you remember hearing about it? Where were you then?
- The Iran-Iraq War begins (1980). Do you remember hearing about it? Where were you then?
- Have you seen Persepolis, in person or in pictures? Which famous place would you most like to see?
- If you could spend one day in any city of Iran, which would it be and why?

QUIZ

How well do you know Iran?

Circle the right answer. The answers are on the last page.

1. Abgoosht is also called dizi. What does the word 'dizi' refer to?

- A) The lamb used in it
- B) The stoneware pot it is cooked and served in
- C) The flatbread eaten with it
- D) The herbs served on the side

2. Why do visitors to Iran need to bring cash?

- A) Shops accept only coins
- B) Foreign bank cards do not work in Iran
- C) Cash machines close at night
- D) Cash is always cheaper than cards

3. Satellites have measured some of the hottest ground temperatures on Earth in which desert?

- A) The Atacama Desert
- B) The Namib Desert
- C) The Lut Desert in Iran
- D) The Gobi Desert

4. 'Dast-e shomâ dard nakone', a warm way to say thank you, literally means 'may your hand not hurt'.

- A) True
- B) False

5. The Cyrus Cylinder, written after Cyrus took Babylon, is kept in which museum today?

- A) The Louvre in Paris
- B) The British Museum in London
- C) The National Museum of Iran in Tehran
- D) The Metropolitan Museum in New York

6. The Historic Bazaar of Tabriz is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

- A) True
- B) False

7. According to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (2025), about what share of the world's saffron does Iran grow?

- A) 85 to 90 percent
- B) About half
- C) About a tenth
- D) About a quarter

8. The Tomb of Hafez is in Isfahan.

- A) True
- B) False

9. Shah Abbas the Great made Shiraz his capital in 1598.

- A) True
- B) False

10. Whose army took Persepolis in 330 BC, after which its palaces burned?

- A) Alexander the Great
- B) Julius Caesar
- C) Genghis Khan
- D) Xerxes

11. The Safavid shahs watched polo games in Naqsh-e Jahan Square from the Ali Qapu palace.

- A) True
- B) False

12. As of September 2026, Iran has fewer than ten UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

- A) True
- B) False

Quiz answers

1. B) The stoneware pot it is cooked and served in

A dizi is the stoneware pot it is cooked and served in. You pour off the broth over bread first, then mash the meat and vegetables.

2. B) Foreign bank cards do not work in Iran

Because of sanctions, foreign bank cards do not work in Iran, so visitors bring cash and change it at official exchange offices.

3. C) The Lut Desert in Iran

The Lut Desert in Iran: its sand has been measured at 70.7 °C. It became a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2016.

4. True

True. It thanks someone for the work of their hands, such as cooking a meal, and is often said to a host.

5. B) The British Museum in London

The British Museum in London holds the cylinder, found in the ruins of Babylon in 1879. It has been lent to Iran and other countries for exhibitions.

6. True

True. The Tabriz Historic Bazaar Complex was inscribed in 2010. It grew rich as a stop on the Silk Road.

7. A) 85 to 90 percent

Iran grows 85 to 90 percent of the world's saffron, most of it in Razavi Khorasan and South Khorasan provinces.

8. False

False. The Tomb of Hafez is in Shiraz, the poet's home city, in a garden where people come to recite his poems.

9. False

False. In 1598 Shah Abbas moved his capital from Qazvin to Isfahan and filled it with mosques, palaces, gardens and bridges.

10. A) Alexander the Great

Alexander the Great of Macedon took Persepolis in 330 BC. Xerxes was a Persian king who built at Persepolis, and Genghis Khan lived some 1,500 years later.

11. True

True. Polo grew out of chovgan, an ancient Persian horseback game, and the shahs watched matches from the Ali Qapu balcony.

12. False

False. As of September 2026, Iran has 30 UNESCO World Heritage Sites, including Persepolis, Naqsh-e Jahan Square and the Lut Desert.

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