

## **My Trip to Iran**

### **January 3, 1995**

Hi! I'm going to visit my grandmother and grandfather in Iran! They live in a house in Tehran and they have a house next to the sea. She has short, curly, brown hair, with nice dark brown eyes. This year she told me she would try to take me all over Iran. I can't wait to get there. I read every book I brought which is one chapter book and one short book. Oh! I have nothing to worry about now; I can see Iran right now! I just caaan't wait!

When I got there, all the women were wearing big cloths over their heads. Then I remembered if I am nine or older I have to wear a chador. Then I remembered: I had brought one in my bag. I rushed to the conveyor belt, and caught my bag and opened a compartment. And there it was! I quickly put it on. Then I spotted my grandmother coming towards me.

I ran to her and hugged her a long time. Finally, she took me to her house. It is a one-story, and the roof is blue with white walls. In the back yard they have orange trees. The room they had got ready for me had blue walls, a pink bed spread, and a pink pillow. My dresser was blue and so was the door. Iranians like blue, as you can see from the cover of this report. I even had my own phone! I had a lot of books, too, because I can read a little Farsi, the language of Iran.

Oh! Over all the excitement, I had not seen my grandfather. I ran into the kitchen where my grandmother was making dinner. As I ran in, I saw the tea kettle on top of some sort of gold colored thing. I asked my grandmother what it was. She said it made tea and they called it a samovar; it is made of brass or silver. I decided to ask her my question. When I asked her, she said he was on his way home.

I ran to my room. There were my bags right where I had left them. I opened the bag that had the stuff I had brought. But then when I looked inside, I saw that my present was missing. Then I remembered that I had left it on the table at my house. Then I heard the door open and shut. I ran to the front door. My grandfather has white hair and dark green eyes, but when he was young he had dark hair like most Iranians. Then he suggested that I go unpack my stuff and come down for dinner.

He told me to get a good night's sleep and in the morning he would take me and my grandmother sightseeing. So I went and unpacked, ate my dinner, and went to bed. Iran is halfway around the world from California so I was very sleepy. We had had a traditional dish of Iran which is my favorite, chelo kabab, which is meat and is eaten with Persian style rice called basmati rice, made not to be sticky.

In the morning, my grandfather, my grandmother, and me went sightseeing. The first day he took us to the Caspian Sea. It was so fun! I made a giant fish out of sand. It was a sturgeon, which is especially found in the Caspian. Good thing their house is next to the sea! I got sand all over me. I also made an angel out of wet sand. My grandmother and me went walking down the beach, looking and looking for shells, but we couldn't find any because the Caspian is not an ocean. It has no salt; its water is fresh. But suddenly I spotted a shell, probably dropped by a tourist from a gift shop, since there are many hotels by the Caspian. By that time it was getting dark. It looked really beautiful when the sun set, too. There are many beautiful and unusual places in Iran. When we got home, my grandfather said he would take me to Mount Damavand next week.

I spent one week exploring the house, swimming, going to movies, and visiting palaces and museums in Tehran. When it was time to go to Mount Damavand, I put on my snow jacket, my

snow boots, and my snow pants. When we got there, it looked like a huge volcano with snow on top. My grandfather told me it was the tallest mountain in Iran. My grandmother told me it also was the biggest of the Alborz Mountains, which go across the north of Iran. After making an angel in the snow and having a snowball fight, on our way back to the car, I saw a sheep coming towards us. I pointed it out to my grandparents. The sheep came over to me and started chewing on my boot laces. There are many, many sheep in Iran. I tried to pull it away, but I could not. Finally, we were lucky we had parked the car as high as we could, so we finally could take my snow boot off. Good thing my grandmother made me wear my shoes underneath.

When we got back home, my grandfather told me that the next day he would buy me new snow boots that did not have laces. He also told me that the day after the next day, he would take me on my last sight before I left Iran, the city of Shiraz.

The next day my grandfather bought me some nice white snow boots, the very ones I have on now. You can buy anything in Iran. That night we had osh for dinner; it is beans with noodles. Then next morning we went to Shiraz. That is where a famous poet, Hafez, was born. Almost every Iranian owns the book of Hafez's poems. After going there, we went to Persepolis. It is at the base of a mountain. It is the ruins of the first king's castle, and it is 2500 years old.

The next day I started to pack my bags. Then my grandmother and my grandfather took me to the airport. We hugged each other a long time. When I had to leave I started to cry. But my grandmother said she and my grandfather would come to my house one month later. That made me feel much better. When I got back to the U.S., I took off my chador. When I got home, I was really surprised when all of my friends were there. Then I saw a welcome-home banner hanging on the wall. That night I thanked my parents for the party and went to bed.

I hope you learned a lot about Iran from my trip. By the way, now my grandparents are visiting me, and they finally got their present!

## **Geography**

Iran is a large country with an area of 636,296 square miles.

Iran is north of the Arabian Sea and the Persian Gulf, directly south of the Caspian Sea, west of Afganistan and Pakistan, and east of Iraq. Iran is 65 degrees E latitude and 35 degrees longitude.

The Elburz Mountains are north of Tehran, the capital city. The Zayandh River is in the southwest. The Kavir Desert is east of Tehran. Most of Iran is a high desert plateau.

## **Climate**

Iran is very hot and dry, except near the Caspian Sea.

People in Iran adapt to their climate by building dome-shaped roofs, which provide protection from the heat of the sun.

## **People**

Iran had 50.3 million people in 1997. The majority of the people in Iran are farmers and herders.

Most of the people living in Iran live in or near Tehran, the capital. Other cities are: Shiraz, Isfahan, Tabriz, Mashad, Kerman, Bandar Abbas, Bandar Khomeini, Ahvaz, and Kermanshah.

People in Iran travel by railroad, airplane, and bus between cities. Most families have cars or motorbikes.

Two people are very well known: Hafez, the most famous poet of Iran, who lived about 600 years ago, and Ruhollah Khomeini, the leader of Iran during the revolution against the last Shah (king).

### **Languages**

People in Iran speak Farsi (Persian), Afgani, Turkish, Arabic, Kurdish, Lur, Bakhtiar, and Baluchi.

### **Government**

The official name is Islamic Republic of Iran. It was Persia before the 20th century.

The government of Iran is an Islamic republic, with a parliamentary system controlled by religious parties, councils, and courts.

### **Products**

Iran has many oil wells. It also exports caviar and pistachios.

Iran has many tourist attractions. Darius' palace (built about 2300 years ago) is in Persepolis, near Shiraz. Many mosques (Islamic places of worship) are found, but the most famous one is in Isfahan. Isfahan also has many famous buildings from the days of King Abbas (about 1600).

### **Food**

Persians eat a lot of meat. They have only a few dishes that do not contain meat. Chelo kabab is one of the most common in most homes and restaurants, even though it is very simple. It's a dish that contains either beef, chicken, or pork, with rice, baked tomatoes, and greenery. Ash (osh) is a soup that has noodles, barley, and a variety of different things. There are many different kinds, such as Ashetorch, a dried fruit soup, Ashejo, a barley and pea soup, and Ashemast, a yogurt soup. They don't sound good, but they are!

All meals either contain rice or bread. There are two different kinds of bread. There is lavash, a white bread which is very thin and often served with cheese for breakfast, and there is sangak, a brown bread which is thicker and eaten while still warm. There is a portion of yogurt with every thing, even ash!

### **Clothes**

The traditional Persian clothes are very elaborate and contain a lot of beads and silks. They flow and have intricate designs, along with beautiful colors. Now, under religious rule (theocracy), Iranian women have to wrap up in big shawls (chador) and only their eyes and feet can be seen. Persians were very elaborate and even their shoes were fancy: they were the color of gold. Some rich people's party shoes were made of gold thread and jewels!

### **Traditions, Celebrations, and Holidays**

Persian holidays relate to the ancient Zoroastrian religion.

Now Ruz (Persian New Year) is on the first day of Spring. People celebrate in various ways. The most common is the haftsin, a way of welcoming the new year. The display in a house contains seven things beginning with S (in Farsi). In English they are: apples, wheat grass, sugar, salt, garlic, vinegar, and sumac. It also contains gold fish as a sign of life, flowers as a sign of nature, and coins as a sign for wealth in the upcoming year. There are two kinds of "Santa Clauses": Amu Norooz (Uncle New Year) and Haji Firooz (a more child-based figure).

Char Shambeh Soori is on the Tuesday evening before the Persian New Year. People jump over a little fire. The reason for this is that all of the problems of your last year fall in the fire and burn, and you start out fresh.

Sizdah Bedar is on the 13th day after Persian New Year. Girls throw grass into flowing water to catch a husband in the coming year.

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