

December 2022

Dear Friends,

I had the opportunity to travel internationally this year. Iran was my destination of choice and I traveled there twice - once in the spring and again in the fall. Below are some notes about my time in Iran.

My interest in Iran began about fourteen years ago when Art and I watched a Rick Steves video about Iran on PBS. I was smitten; Art not so much, although he agreed it could be a fascinating adventure.

Last spring I had the opportunity to take a tour in Iran. I had such a good time that I decided to return to Iran last fall. I enjoyed the country even more the second time.

Prior to going to Iran, I thought it was mostly desert sprinkled with blue domes covered with tiles in shades of blue. I did see and enjoy those blue domes as well as desert areas.



Imam Mosque Dome - Esfahan



Goharshad Mosque in Mahsad

However, I found Iran to have much more including mountains, forests, rice paddies and even small tea plantations in the northern part of the country around the Caspian Sea

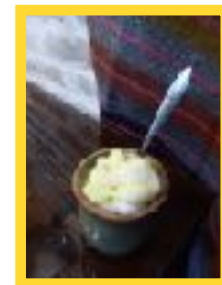


Left to right: Driving in the Hyrcanian forests (UNESCO), Growing Rice, Harvesting tea

I enjoyed eating delicious Persian food:



Lamb, fish, chicken, beef, fresh vegetables, fresh fruit, and lots of saffron! Even saffron ice cream!



Meeting and and visiting with the warmest, friendliest people I have ever met was one of many highlights of my time in Iran. Many asked to have their picture with me. A few examples:



While most of the country is Muslim, there are people of Orthodox Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian faiths - all living together peacefully.

Although we were aware that protests were occurring in many cities, they took place in specific areas that were off the tourist route. Therefore we did not see any protests nor did we read any news about the protests because the government owned Internet service was shut down and unavailable. I never felt unsafe. When I returned to Dallas, I read a number of newspaper articles about the protests in Iran. People outside of Iran had more information than we had while in the country.

Below is a map of Iran showing many of the places I visited including Tehran, Esfahan, Bam, Shiraz, Persepolis, Kerman, Mashad, Qom, Yazd and Tabriz among other places. The green shows the mountainous, forested areas.

Fondly,

Bennetta

