

IRAN

Iran officially the **Islamic Republic of Iran** and formerly known internationally as Persia until 1935, is a country in Central Eurasia, located on the northeastern shore of the Persian Gulf and the southern shore of the Caspian Sea. Since 1949, "Persia" and "Iran" have been used interchangeably in cultural context, however, Iran is the name used officially in political context. The name Iran is a cognate of *Aryan*, and means "Land of the Aryans".

History

Early history

Dozens of pre-historic sites across the Iranian plateau point to the existence of ancient cultures and urban settlements in the fourth millennium BC, centuries before the earliest civilizations arose in nearby Mesopotamia. Proto-Iranians first emerged following the separation of Indo-Iranians, and are traced to the Bactria-Margiana Archaeological Complex. Aryan, (Proto-Iranian) tribes arrived in the Iranian plateau in the third and second millennium BC, probably in more than one wave of emigration, and settled as nomads

Pre-Islamic statehood (625 BC – 651 AD)

The Medes are credited with the unification of Iran as a nation and empire (625–559 BC), the largest of its day, until Cyrus the Great established a unified empire of the Medes and Persians leading to the Achaemenid Empire (559–330 BC), and further unification between peoples and cultures. After Cyrus' death, his son Cambyses continued his father's work of conquest, making significant gains in Egypt.

In 499 BC Athens lent support to a revolt in Miletus which resulted in the sacking of Sardis. This led to an Achaemenid campaign against Greece known as the Greco-Persian Wars which lasted the first half of the 5th century BC. During the Greco-Persian wars Persia made some major advantages and razed Athens in 480 BC, But after a string of Greek victories the Persians were forced to withdraw. Fighting ended with the peace of Callias in 449 BC.

Geography

Iran (Persia) is located in southwest Asia and borders the Gulf of Oman, Persian Gulf, and Caspian Sea between Iraq and Afghanistan.

Its mountains have helped to shape both the political and the economic history of the country for several centuries.

With an area of 1,648,000 square kilometers, Iran shares its northern borders with three post-Soviet states: Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Turkmenistan. Iran's western borders are with Turkey in the north and Iraq in the south.

Climate

Because of its size, topography and altitude, Iran experiences great climatic extremes. Winters (December to February) can be unpleasantly cold, especially in the north and west, and in most of the rest of the country the nights are very cold. In summer (June to August) temperatures as high as 50°C are nothing out of the ordinary along the Persian Gulf coast and southern provinces.

Regular rainfall is more or less restricted to the far north and west – the area north of the Alborz Mountains receives an annual average of about 1300mm of rain, but although year-round cloud helps keep summer temperatures manageable the high humidity makes summer pretty muggy on the Caspian coast. In western Iran winter temperatures are regularly well below zero and snow frequently remains until early spring, making some mountain routes impassable.

Population: 72.2 million (UN, 2008)

Iran is a diverse country consisting of people of many religions and ethnic backgrounds cemented by the Persian culture. The majority of the population speaks the Persian language, which is also the official language of the country, as well as other Iranian languages or dialects

Currency: 10 Iranian Rials = 1 Toman

Getting there and around

Most airlines operate scheduled weekly flights from and to Tehran, including Iran Air the national carrier. Flights reconfirmation must be made 72 hours prior to departure. For all passengers entering and visiting Iran, a valid passport bearing an entry visa is required. "Iran Travel" agency makes facilities for this procedure through Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Iran has a long paved road system linking most of its towns and all of its cities. Trains operated on 11,106 km (6,942 mi) of railroad track. The country's major port of entry is Bandar-Abbas on the Strait of Hormuz. After arriving in Iran, imported goods are distributed throughout the country by trucks and freight trains.

More information

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