

# Mashhad

Practical Information 2018



## Language Spoken

The official language spoken is Persian (AKA Farsi). However, a good portion of the youth and shopkeepers can understand and speak some English.



## Climate

In autumn and spring the weather is usually quite mild and lovely. The day time is an average of 21°C and night time is fairly chilly at 13°C. However, the locals say that the weather is so unpredictable that we should carry a suitcase with us when we leave the house, as we may experience four seasons in one day! In general, the climate is semi-arid. In the summer, the average temperature is around 35°C, with clear sunny skies. In the winter the average temperature is about 12°C, with a few light snow showers.



## Geographic Location

Mashhad is situated in the northeast of Iran and is 934 km from Tehran. It is the capital of Khorasan Razavi province, it covers an area of 10450 km<sup>2</sup>, and is 980 m from sea level. It is surrounded by two mountain ranges: Hezar Masjed extends from the northeast to the east of Mashhad and Binalood extends from the southwest to the west.



## Time

Attention: The day before the official start of autumn (21 September) we change our clocks one hour back. The local time in Mashhad is GMT +3:30 hours. Iran observes daylight savings time and the majority of the country is one time zone, with the exception in the far west of the country.



## How to Pay

Iran presently cannot process credit cards and everything must be paid with Iranian currency. Therefore, if you want to exchange money then you should have cash in Euro, Dollar or British Pound. The currency of Iran is called the Rial and approximately 120,000 Rial is equivalent to about 1 Euros. Upon arriving in all international airports it is fairly easy to exchange major foreign currency. Otherwise, throughout all Iranian metropolises there are plenty of banks and authorized exchange centers that can easily convert your currency. The paper money of Iran is printed in small increments and you may find it a bit awkward to carry. As an alternative, you can request travelers' checks from banks/exchange centers - also known as Iran Checks - in increments of 1,000,000 Rial (equivalent to one hundred Toman, see paragraph below).

**Attention:** Please note that the official name of Iran's currency is the Rial, however in the streets it is referred to as the Toman and the last digit of the Rial is dropped. For example, 1,000,000 Rial is 100,000 Toman or 10,000 Rial is 1,000 Toman.



## Business Hours

The official work hours in Mashhad are from 7:30 am to 2 pm, from Saturday to Wednesday and on Thursday from 7:30 am to 1:00 pm. Banking hours are 7:30 am to 2 pm; some banks are open in the afternoon.

Shops are usually open at 10 am and close around 2:00 pm for lunch. They then reopen around 5 pm to about 10 pm. Stores around the Holy Shrine generally open earlier - about 8 am - and remain open all day until 11 pm. Most stores are closed on Friday mornings, with a few exceptions around the Holy Shrine. However, some are open in the afternoon.

Restaurants normally open for lunch at 12 pm until 3 pm. They reopen again for dinner around 8 pm until 11 pm. Most sandwich shops remain open all day, starting at 11 am.



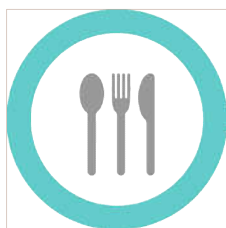
## International Telephone Calls

SIM cards and charges can be easily purchased at the airport, in the hotel store or at practically any supermarket and shopping center. **Irancell** and **Hamrah Aval** are the most popular SIM card companies and their prices are reasonable.



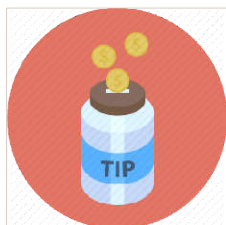
## Hotels

Mashhad has a large variety of hotels including 5-star hotels, inns, hostels, and motels. However, during peak tourist season booking a hotel must be done well in advance. It is common for 4 and 5-star hotels to have wireless Internet, coffee and ice cream shops, handicraft stores, ticket agencies, inner-city transportation to the Holy Shrine, taxi services (for a fee) and restaurants.



## Restaurants

Mashhad has an array of restaurants to suit everyone's taste. They range from western fast food to top quality international buffets and traditional garden restaurants. The portions are usually generous and the prices are fair, compared to the rest of the country.



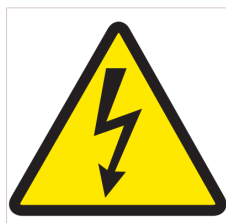
## Tipping

It is not customary in fast food restaurants or sandwich shops to leave a tip. However, in larger and more formal restaurants it is common to leave a 15 to 20% tip, provided there is no automatic service charge.



## Water

Tap water is safe to drink. Take care to **only** drink from public fountains designated for human consumption. Moreover, domestic and foreign bottled water is readily available in all grocery stores and restaurants for a nominal fee.

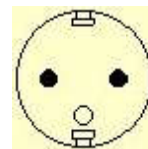


## Electrical Voltage

The voltage is 220V and the plugs are 2-pins and rounded. Similar to the below picture.



ECA C  
CEE7 XVI(2) Europlug,  
CEE7 XVII



ECA E or F  
CEE7 VII Schuko



## In the Airport

As mentioned before, foreign currency can be easily exchanged 24/7.

Porters are available for assistance and they expect a small tip for services rendered (10,000 to 20,000 Toman).

Official airport taxis are always on hand to transport travelers; although be sure to **only** use official airport taxis. They can be easily identified by TAXI or TAKSI signs on their cars. See section on *Getting Around Mashhad* for more information. Custom laws prohibit the transfer of precious carpets and other objects that have historical and cultural value. Only one carpet or short-napped coarse carpet, not more than 6 m<sup>2</sup>, is allowed to be taken out of the country. You should check with your own country's custom laws to see what you are allowed to take back; as some countries prohibit pistachios, other types of nuts and dried fruits and wood products.



## Getting around Mashhad

**Buses:** Using public transportation in Mashhad is relatively cheap compared to other parts of the world due the government's subsidization program. There are modern CNG buses for a nominal fee per trip and are easily accessible at all bus stops and run every 15 minutes. Bus tickets cost 6500 Rial (650 Tomans), but you must first purchased a MANN card for 15,000 toman. The card can be purchased at kiosks near busy bus stops, some grocery stores, and Metro stations.

**Taxis:** The city also has semi-private and private taxi services and shared taxis. The system of shared taxis is such that a passenger must hail a taxi, usually on a street corner or taxi stand and state which street you intend to go. This type of taxi picks up several passengers at a time, unless you state *Dar-Bast* (meaning you want private service); however, you should first agree on a fixed price before you get in for Dar-bast. It is important to know that you should get into shared taxis only with an official taxi sign on its roof or written on the body of the car. Semi-private taxis have an official taxi sign and emblem on their cars, plus use meters to calculate the cost of each trip. The names of these taxi services are 133, 1829, and 1830 and you can contact these taxis by dialing those numbers or hailing them on the street. In most tourist and pilgrim sites and airports/terminals there are taxi stands that make it much easier to get around. Some hotels also provide taxi and shuttle services for their patrons. Traveling is relatively safe; however, just like in all other parts of the world common sense should be used.



## Important Phone Numbers

In case of emergencies it is best to first contact one of our staff workers (contact in Mashhad: Cell: **Mr. Rakhshani +98 9158529245**, **Mr. Ali +98 9369256540** or **Mr. Poola'ie +98 9364980901**). The municipality now offers a trilingual help hotline 137. Operators speak Persian, English, and Arabic and they can be contacted for any sort of emergency, and even for tourist information.



## Dress Code

Throughout Iran, everyone is expected to follow the religious laws of observing the Islamic modest dress. Males should not wear shorts or tank tops. For females, this includes covering one's head with a scarf, and a loose-fitting long-sleeved tunic, and full-length skirt or pants. Note the fabric should not be see-through, although the color of one's clothing is **not** important. In addition, the wearing of light makeup for women is no problem.

### → Other Points to Know

Moreover, there are social and religious taboos, which are good to know so as not to give a wrong message. **Men and women do not shake hands** or physically touch in public and out of marriage relationships are punishable by law. Generally, behavior one would observe in a formal situation is preferred. Picture or video tapping is not allowed in high security locations, as is in other countries. Otherwise, everyone is allowed to take personal pictures and video tape. However, if you want to take pictures of strangers it is preferable as well as polite to ask permission first.

**Consuming alcoholic beverages, using illegal drugs, and bring them into the country are against the law in Iran;** as well as public drunkenness and disruptive behavior. Please note that these carry **heavy** punishments, if caught.

In business situations, business cards and other exchanges (email, contact numbers, etc...) are normally offered only to high-level managers. The situation is very formal. People are addressed solely by titles and last names. Again, handshaking is only reserved for the same genders.

During meetings or conferences, fruit and or pastries are usually served along with tea and instant coffee mixes and meals are rather heavy, as Iranians are very hospitable.



## → Mashhad's Religious and Historical Significance

The initial name of this city was Tus which changed to Mashhad al-Reza after the martyrdom of Imam Reza. Mashhad means “the place of martyrdom of al-Reza”. Al-Reza or Imam Reza (peace be upon him), as he is widely known, was a direct descendent of the holy Prophet Mohammad (peace and blessings be upon him) and the eighth Imam (leader) of the Shi’ite Muslims. Over one thousand years has passed since Imam Reza’s martyrdom, and present day Mashhad has grown into a large metropolis that annually hosts over 30 million domestic and international pilgrims and tourists. Moreover, the site of the grave of Imam Reza has growing into a grand spiritual complex to accommodate these pilgrims. Indeed, the artistic architecture of this complex is a definite must-see and the spiritual atmosphere is wondrous!

**Attention:** However, be aware that the sole purpose of the Holy Shrine is for spiritual reasons and it does not function as a tourist site. Given this, please respect the atmosphere of the Holy Shrine and the pilgrims. Entry into the Holy Shrine requires pilgrims and visitors to strictly observe the Islamic covering for men and women, and **not** carry in prohibited objects like cameras, tablets, laptops, USB ports, DVDs, CDs, sharp objects and liquids, suitcases or other large bags and such. Follow the rules of what you can bring and not bring onto an airplane. There are also restricted areas for non-Muslim visitors. However, to accommodate tourists, there are some amazing museums in the Holy Shrine and a tour offered that gives in-depth information about the Holy Shrine.

If you want to make a trip to the Holy Shrine please arrange with our Office to provide you with a guide/translator and transportation.

*We hope you have a wonderful stay in Mashhad.*



**Program venue:**

**Contact:**

**International Scientific Cooperation Office**

Mashhad Municipality

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**WE WISH YOU A PLEASANT STAY IN MASHHAD.**