

Mashhad – Iran

Mashhad is the second most populous city of Iran after Tehran city. This city was chosen as the capital of Iran by Nader king at Afshar era. Mashhad the most important place of pilgrimage for Muslims because the Holy Shrine of the eight Imam of Muslims (Imam Reza) is located there. Mashhad attractions include recreational centers such as moderate villages and beautiful parks especially water parks. Mashhad is famous for its numerous shopping centers. Some historic sites in Mashhad include: Nader King Tomb (Nader Garden Treasure), The Tomb of Abolqasem Ferdowsi Toosi (poet), Green Dome, Sun Palace and several museums.

1. Holy shrine of Imam Reza

Holy shrine of Imam Reza, the eighth Imam of Muslims-Twelve Shia, is the most important place of pilgrimage in Mashhad and Iran as well. It's a complex which contains the mausoleum of Imam Reza and is the largest mosque in the world by dimension and the second largest by capacity. Other places contained within the complex are the Goharshad Mosque, a museum, a library, four seminaries, a cemetery, the Razavi University of Islamic Sciences, a dining hall for pilgrims, vast prayer halls, and many other buildings. The complex is the center of tourism in Iran. Annually, about 30 to 35 million people attend there. The shrine itself covers an area of 267,079m² while the eight courtyards which surround it cover an area of 331,578m² - totaling 598,657 m² (6,443,890 sq. ft.).



By the end of the 9th century a dome was built on the grave and many buildings and bazaars sprang up around it. During more than a millennium it has been devastated and reconstructed several times. Example:



The burial chamber



Sappakhane



Naqqhareh-zani



fountains in Holy shrine

The complex contains a total of eight courtyards (Shan), which cover an area of over 331,578 m² (3,569,080 sq. ft.):

- Sahn Inqilab
- Sahn Azadi
- Sahn Imam Khomeini
- Sahn Gowharshad Mosque
- Sahn Quds
- Sahn Jumhuri Islami
- Sahn Jaame' Razavi
- Sahn Gadeer

❖ Halls (Bast) in Holy Shrine of Imam Reza:

From the courtyards, external hallways named after scholars lead to the inner areas of the mosque. They are referred to as Bast (Sanctuary), since they were meant to be a safeguard for the shrine areas:

- Bast Shaykh Toosi- leads to the Central Library
- Bast Shaykh Tabarsi
- Bast Shaykh Hur Ameli
- Bast Shaykh Baha'i

The Bast hallways lead towards a total of 21 internal halls or porticos (Riwaq) which surround the burial chamber of Imam Reza. Adjacent to the burial chamber is also a mosque dating back to the 10th century known as, Bala-e-Sar Mosque.

2. Goharshad Mosque

In the 15th century, during the reign of the Timurid Shahrukh Mirza, Mashhad became one of the main cities of the realm. In 1418 his wife, Goharshad, founded the construction of an outstanding mosque beside the shrine, which is known as the Goharshad Mosque which now serves as one of the prayer halls within the Imam Reza shrine complex. The architect of the edifice was Ghavameddin Shirazi, who is responsible for so many of Shahrukh's great buildings, with the architectural and decorative manpower supplied from Shiraz and Isfahan. The mosque underwent some renovations during the Safavid and Qajar eras. It has four iwans (porches) and a courtyard measuring 50 m × 55 m (164 ft. × 180 ft.), as well as several shabestans (seraglios).



3. Mausoleum of Khajeh Morad

Khaje Morad Tomb is located 12 km southeast of Mashhad on a hillside. According to many scholars and historians Khaje Morad entitled Harsameh is regarded as one of the most important companions and the lovers of Imam Reza who became the one who accompanied him in his trip from Medina. He suffered from many severe difficulties and pressures that cruel rulers of Abbasi dynasty imposed on him. His tomb and shrine is located near Imam Reza Holy shrine as he wished and it is visited by a great number of his lovers and pilgrims annually. The main structure is a rectangular room, 4.5 m in length and 4 m in width. There are some rooms around the mausoleum for settling pilgrims. In north groin there is an Iwan (porch) with the height of 5m decorated with mirror work. Its tomb includes a number of rooms, two minarets and a dome. There are also beautiful mirror works inside the main room.



4. Mausoleum of Khajeh Rabi'

Khajeh Rabi', also known as Rabi ibn Khasim, was a companion of Prophet Muhammad and an army general ruler of Rey during the reign of Imam Ali. His Mausoleum is situated in the center of a massive garden, at the end of Khajeh Rabi Street in Mashhad City. This building was constructed on the suggestion of "Sheikh Bahaei" to "Sha Abbas Safavi" and with the assistance of "Oloq-orazavi-olkhadem" in the end of 16th century AD. Outer design of the tomb is octagonal and internally four-terraced. There is a terrace built on each of the outer walls, from those on the larger walls, there are corridors leading indoors; and those on the smaller walls are small and in two floors. On the roof, a turquoise dome (18 m height from the floor) is constructed. Utilization of colored tiles on the outside facade, golden painting on the inside wall coverings, and two cornices of Ali-Reza Abbasi's script (1607 & 1619), has given special appearance to this building.



Parks and Recreational Centers in Mashhad City

1. Mellat (National) Park

This park is the oldest garden at Mashhad which was constructed out of city during the reign of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi King. This amusement park is now located in west of Mashhad and on the northwest side of Azadi Square and is considered as the biggest park in Mashhad. The park consists of sanitary facilities, mosque, sport fields, library, swimming pool, special ladies park and theme park. Its theme park has various facilities for the entertainment of all ages such as roller coasters, a train, the largest gyro swing in Iran and a new Ferris wheel that is the largest one built in the middle east and the third largest one after similar ones in London and Italy with a height of 80 meters, 260 tons and 56 cabins with the capacity of 448 passengers.



2. Vakil Abad Forest Park and Zoo

Vakil Abad Park is an old beautiful resort in southwest of Mashhad located at the end of Vakil Abad Blvd. It had been at the center of attention for a long time due to its antiquity, pleasant weather and location in a beautiful valley. It has an area over 70 hectares with a natural garden consists of pomegranates and pine trees, old trees and a seasonal river. Its water is supplied by an aqueduct. Vakil Abad Zoo is adjacent to the Vakil Abad forest park which is the only zoo in Khorasan Razavi province. The zoo has both carnivorous and herbivorous animals, aquatic animals, reptiles and birds.



3. Kouhsangi (Stone Mountain) Park

This park is the second major park at Mashhad after Mellat (National) Park and we can say that it's one of the most beautiful parks built in Iran.



4. Kuhestan Park-e Khurshid (Sun Mountain Park)

This park is located at the end of Hashemieh Boulevard. It's the first park in Mashhad which has beach football and volleyball pitches with standard dimensions. It's worthy to mention that its bowers lighting is supplied by the solar power.



5. Kouhsar Complex (City Roof) and water parks

This complex provides a unique perspective of Mashhad City and has recreational facilities and amenities such as billiards, bowling, tennis court, restaurant, wedding forum, and so on. Beautiful waterfronts give a special beauty to the complex. There are several water parks in Mashhad some of which are considered as the largest parks built in the Middle East including exciting slides and tunnels, roaring river, surfing and so on.

