

# *Iran*

THE SPLENDOR OF AN ANCIENT CIVILIZATION

SAMPLE ITINERARY : : AUTHENTIC ASIA



*Iran has always been a source of mystery for the intrepid traveler! It has witnessed more than ten thousand years of history and is a land of rich culture and home to several World Heritage Sites. It is a place where the teachings of great mystics, philosophers and poets alike are treasured and will be continued for thousands of years to come.*

*It is a country of spectacular physical beauty stretching from the tropical shores of the Caspian Sea to the desert and oasis towns of Kavir and Lut and on to the snowcapped Zagros and Elborz Mountains. The variety of scenery to be found throughout Iran is breathtaking and the thousands of minarets and domes glistening in the sun bear witness to the splendor of Islamic architecture.*



## Day 1 | Tehran

We will arrange for a VIP arrival in Tehran. You will be met as you disembark from the aircraft, and will be accompanied to the VIP lounge where your immigration papers will be processed. You will then be escorted into the arrival's area where your guide will be waiting for you. Transfer to the Laleh Hotel. The hotel room will be ready for immediate check-in. Remainder of the morning is at leisure to catch up on some sleep, relax, and freshen up.

Tehran is a bustling metropolis city of almost 15 million people and a city of contrasts. It is modern and traditional, secular and religious, rich and poor. We spend the afternoon exploring some of the city's treasures beginning at the Golestan Palace, the former residence of the 19th and early 20th century Qajar Kings of Iran. The Golestan Palace complex is all that remains of Tehran's Historical Citadel (Arg), built at the time of Shah Tahmasb I during the Safavid period. It was reconstructed during the reign of Karim Khan Zand and was chosen as the venue of the royal court and residence at the time of the Qajar Kings.

The Royal Court and Residence occupied more than one third of Arg and, like traditional Iranian houses, it had two interior and exterior quarters. The exterior quarters consisted of the

administrative section of the royal court and a square shaped garden known as Golestan (rose garden). These two parts were separated by several buildings that were destroyed during the Pahlavi period. The interior quarters were located east of the administrative section and to the north of Golestan. This area was once a large courtyard including the residences of the Shah's women, with a huge dormitory in the middle that in fact contained the "Harem sari ". These buildings were destroyed in the Pahlavi period and the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance was built in their place.

A short walk takes us to the Tehran Bazaar. Having tea in one of the bazaar's tea houses often located in the underground level of the old homes is a must. The tea houses are a gathering place for the young and old and everyone will take time out to smoke their "hookah" pipes.

**Accommodations:** Laleh Hotel

*"The world is a book and those who do not  
travel read only one page."*

*- St. Augustine*

## Day 2 | Tehran

After breakfast we set out on an excursion to Darband, a small village located at the foot of the Alborz Mountains just outside of Northern Tehran (the drive will take anywhere from 30 minutes to 1 hour depending on the traffic). This is a getaway for the local people who want to escape the heat and noise of the city. Here we will find wonderful authentic local restaurants, hiking trails, tea houses, and shops. The ambience is much more laid back than Tehran. It is definitely off the tourist path.

En route to Darband we will stop in one of Northern Tehran's busiest covered food markets where shoppers can find everything ranging from fresh fruit, nuts, spices, and skewered lamb's meat

On the way back to the city, we will stop at the Shah's former palace which is open to visitors and houses some wonderful pieces of Western art. We will also pass by the old U.S. Embassy.

Time permitting, we will include a tour of the Jewelry Museum. Located inside the Central Bank, it houses one of the most exceptional collections of jewelry in the world!

**Accommodations:** Laleh Hotel

### Day 3 | Qom/Kashan

We depart Tehran this morning and head for the charming city of Kashan. Driving south from Tehran, we will pass through Qom, one of Iran's most religious and conservative cities. It is home to the marvelous Hazrat-e Masumeh shrine. It is also one of Iran's fastest growing cities, with the population doubling since the 1979 revolution. Pilgrims, scholars, and students of Shiite Islam come from all around the world to study here. As a very religiously devout city, travelers here must dress conservatively, even inside the car.

We continue on to Kashan. This enthralling oasis features a historic bazaar amidst the renovated old town district. It is said to be one of the best in Iran and has been active for 800 years. It is also the city where Shah Abbas I is buried.

The beautiful and historical Fin Garden is a must see. It is featured on Unesco's World Heritage list of Iranian gardens as a prime example of the classic Persian Garden form. The garden is symbolically divided into four sectors, drawing upon the Zoroastrian view of honoring the elements of sky, earth, water, and plants. The Fin Garden also marks the location where Amir Kabir, the Qajarid Chancellor, was murdered by an assassin sent by King Nasereddin Shah in 1852. Another remarkable feature here is Sialk Hill, representing one of the oldest urbanized civilizations in the world, dating as early as 6,000 BC. It contains one of the oldest ziggurats (a temple built on a platform) in the world, said to have been built 7,500 years ago.

We will be staying at the lovely boutique hotel, Manouchehri House, situated in Kashan's historic residential neighborhood.

**Accommodations: Manouchehri House**

### Day 4 | Yazd

Our overland journey continues this morning as we depart for Yazd, en route stopping off at the lovely little desert towns of Natanz and Na'in. These ancient settlements have served as important crossroads on the trade routes since the Sassanid Empire. We will then journey along the Great Salt Desert, passing through the authentic and historical towns of Ardakan and Aqdai.

We arrive in Yazd, one of the highlights of any Iran trip! It is the center of the country's Zoroastrian community. The city itself, though not as grand as Isfahan or Persepolis, is truly enchanting with its maze of historic streets and buildings. It emerges like a phoenix from the ashes and is a place to wander and get lost in time.

Today you will learn more about Zoroastrianism, the religion founded by Zoroastra which may have been the world's first monotheistic faith. It was once the religion of the Persian Empire,

but has since been reduced in numbers to fewer than 200,000. Two of the main elements of Zoroastrianism are water and fire. They are agents of ritual purity, and the associated purification ceremonies are considered the basis of ritual life.

In Zoroastrianism, water and fire are respectively the second and last primordial elements to have been created, and scripture considers fire to have its origin in the waters. Both water and fire are considered life-sustaining, and both water and fire are represented within the precinct of a fire temple today.

Zoroastrians usually pray in the presence of some form of fire (which can be considered evident in any source of light), and the culminating rite of the principal act of worship constitutes a "strengthening of the waters". Fire is considered a medium through which spiritual insight

and wisdom is gained, and water is considered the source of that wisdom. Zoroastrians believe in the purity of the elements and, until recently, just as the Tibetans still do, the dead were placed on Towers of Silence where the vultures dispose of the body.

In this way the remains do not pollute the earth through a burial or the sky through cremation. In modern times, the dead are buried in graves lined with concrete.

A late afternoon visit takes us to the Zoroastrian Fire Temple. Zoroastrians come from all over the world to see this "Ateshkadeh" or the "Eternal Flame" that is said to have been burning since about 470 A.D. Visible through a window from the entrance hall, the flame was transferred to Ardakan in 1174 and then to Yazd in 1474 and to its present site in 1940.

We conclude our day at the Towers of Silence (Dakhma) dating back to the 17th century, where until 40 years ago the dead were carried to and left for the vultures.

**Accommodations:** Moshir Garden Hotel



## Day 5 | Yazd

First stop of the day will be the Friday Mosque. With its tiled portal and crowned by twin minarets, it is the tallest in the country, and like many mosques, it was constructed on the site of a Sassanid fire temple. From here we drive to the Seljuk shrine dedicated to the Twelve Shi'ite Imams, known as Davazdeh Imam Shrine. In the afternoon we will tour Alexander's Prison, also known as Zendan-e-Eskander.

This 15th century domed school became known as Alexander's Prison because of a reference made to this place in a Hafez poem. Legend claims that during the reign of Alexander the Great, those who resisted his domination were arrested and on his way through Yazd imprisoned in the courtyard well.

There will be time today to visit some of the city's textile workshops and carpet shops.

**Accommodations:** Moshir Garden Hotel

*“We travel not to escape life, but for life  
not to escape us.”*

*- Anonymous*

## Day 6 | Shiraz

Today's destination is Shiraz, known as the heartland of Persian culture, the City of Roses, City of Love, and City of Gardens. Shiraz has become synonymous with education, nightingales and poetry. The city is home to the graves of the famous poets Hafez and Sa'di. Both are major pilgrimage sites for Iranians.

Upon arrival we will wander through the city's first and finest bazaar known as Vakil Bazaar. The wide vaulted brick avenues are masterpieces of Zand architecture and house almost 200 stores selling everything from carpets to spices. We will also visit the tomb of Hafez. Iran's greatest master of Persian lyric poetry and the literary giant of the 14th century, was born in Shiraz, lived all his life here, sang its praises in unsurpassed verse and was buried in a garden named after him as the Hafezieh. The extraordinary popularity and the wide appeal of this great poet among all Persian-speaking people make his tomb a cherished place, visited by a steady stream of local people. The marble tombstone, engraved with a long verse from the poet was placed here in 1773. Every Iranian can recite his poems by heart!

Tonight, after dinner, we visit the Holy Shrine of Shah-e-Cheragh, the brother of Imam Reza. The tomb of this 9th century martyr draws thousands of pilgrims annually and is the principal

pilgrimage center in this province. The expansive courtyard offers great views of the turquoise dome and golden minarets and the inside of the mosque is tiled with thousands of glass pieces.

**Accommodations:** Homa Hotel



## Day 7 | Shiraz

One of the greatest sites in the Middle East awaits: Persepolis, the old ceremonial capital of the Achaemenian Empire. Many consider Persepolis to be one of the most beautiful archeological sites in the world.

It was once the center of the Great Persian Empire. The Persians called it Takht-E-Djamshid (Throne of Djamshid the Great) and the Greeks called it Persepolis (Capital of Persia). The site is located at the foot of a rugged mountain called Kuh-E-Rahmat (Mountain of Grace). Construction of Persepolis dates back to Darius I around 520 BC who created and unified an empire which eventually was larger and more effectively ruled than any other in the ancient world.

Work on the site was continued by Xerxes and Artaxerxes until 460 BC. In the spring of each year, the ruler and his court would gather at Persepolis to receive the tribute of subject nations and to re-establish universal order for the coming year. Persepolis was eventually conquered by Alexander the Great in 330 BC.

One of the most important features of the ancient site which still remains intact is the Gate of All Nations, built by Xerxes. It is flanked by colossal winged bulls with human heads. Delegations to the Achaemenian court paused here before entering the Hall of Audience of Darius the Great.

Before we return to Shiraz mid-day, we will stop at the Naghsh-E Rostam which is said to contain the tombs of Darius the Great, Xerxes, Artaxerxes and Darius II.

**Accommodations:** Homa Hotel

## Day 8 | Yasuj

We are leaving the tourist trail behind as we embark on an overland journey to Yasuj. This part of our trip is all about the incredible physical beauty of Iran. The road winds through villages, gorges, steep-sided valleys, and fast flowing rivers with the Zagros mountains as a backdrop. This is one of the most spectacular road trips in Iran that ends at the small mountain town of Yasuj.

**Accommodations:** Eram Hotel

*“One’s destination is never a place, but a new way of seeing things.”*

*- Henry Miller*

## Day 9 | Khurand

We are in search of the Bakhtiari Nomads as we depart for Khurand, a small town located in the heart of the Bakhriari Province. We know and hear very little about Iran’s nomadic population. In the 20th century the Iranian government repeatedly tried to settle Iran’s many nomadic tribes. However, to this day there are still approximately 1 million people living as nomads. The Bakhtiari make up only a fraction of the nomadic population occupying an area extending southward from Lorestan province to Khuzestan province and westward from Isfahan to near the Iraqi border. The Bakhtiari nomads are sheep and goat herders and speak a very distinct dialect known as Lori. Nomadic women wear long colorfully layered dresses with much jewelry. They do not have to wear the traditional chador (head and body cover).

Our day ends in the small town of Khurand, close to our next destination which is Isfahan. Accommodations in Khurand are very basic in the Khurand Hotel.

**Accommodations:** Khurand Hotel

## Day 10 | Khurand/Isfahan

We drive to Isfahan, a major city in central Iran that was once the splendid capital of the Seljuk and Safavid dynasties whose legacies established Iran as the cultural heart of the eastern Islamic world in terms of language (Persian), art, and architecture. To many, it is the most beautiful city of the Islamic world and often referred to as the jewel of ancient Persia. It is a city of exquisite blue tiled mosques and sprawling bazaars, a place where one can relax in one of the many tea houses, talk to the local people and admire the breathtakingly beautiful architecture. It is equally famous for its beautiful covered bridges. A famous Persian proverb says "Esfahān nesf-e jahān ast" (Isfahan is half of the world).

**Accommodations:** Abassi Hotel



## Days 11 & 12 | Isfahan

We will spend two days exploring the city.

The first morning starts with a stroll along some of Isfahan's famous fairy tale bridges, Shahrestan, Khajou and Sio-se-pol. Shahrestan is one of the oldest surviving bridges in Iran, built in the 14th Century. It crosses the Zayanderood River at the village of Sharestan.

Our next stop will be the Armenian Quarter, home to 13 churches that serve Isfahan's Christian community which numbers around 7000. The history of the Armenian Quarter dates

back to 1606 and was established by an edit of Shah Abbas I, the influential shah from the Safavid dynasty. At that time, close to 150,000 Armenians were moved to Isfahan from a city called Julfa. As the new residents became famous for the textile skills, “New Julfa” became the hub of one of the greatest trade networks of the early modern era with outposts reaching as far as Manila, London, and even across the Pacific to Mexico City.

The most visited of all the churches in the Armenian Quarter is Vank Cathedral, which shows an interesting mix of décor styles – Iranian tile work next to Christian imagery. The frescoes are marvelous.

In the late afternoon, when the fountains come alive and the fading light beautifully illuminates the surrounding buildings, we head to the square and spend the remainder at Qeisarieh Bazaar, with hundreds of shops displaying the arts and handicrafts for which the city is famous for.

The next morning we return to spend time in one of the world’s greatest city squares, the Maidan-e-Naghsh-e-Jahan or Imam Square, the breathtaking beauty and myriad wonders of which inspired the title “half of the world”. The entire square is surrounded by buildings from the Safavid era.

The Shah (Iman) Mosque is situated on the south side of this square. On the west side you can find Ali Qapu Palace. Sheikh Lotf Allah Mosque is situated on the eastern side of the square and the northern side opens into the Isfahan Grand Bazaar. Today, Mamaaz-e Jom-eh (the Muslim Friday prayer) is held in this square in front of the Shah Mosque. The entire square is listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. At 512 m long and 163 m wide, this square is the second largest in the world, only to be surpassed by Tiananmen Square in Beijing.

Ali-Qapu Palace with its enchanting music rooms and balconies overlooking the square served as a monumental gateway to the royal palaces that used to lay beyond the square. The wonderfully elevated terrace supported by 18 columns offers spectacular views over the square.

From here we continue on to the Imam Mosque, one of the finest and the most stunning mosques in the world. Construction on the Mosque begun in 1611 during the reign of Shah Abbas I and was not completed until 1629. The design and architecture represents a magnificent example of stone carving, and tile work in Iran, with a majesty and splendor that places it among the world's greatest buildings. The mosque inscriptions were executed by Ali Reda Abbasi, the greatest calligrapher of the Safavid period.

The next visit will be the Friday Mosque, built during the 11th and early 12th century. It is considered a landmark in the evolution of Iranian sacred architecture, built by using a traditional plan with four ivans, or vaulted halls, and places on the axes of a central courtyard. The mosque offers a clear example of the Mongol influence on Persian architecture (Chinghis Khan’s son, Olgedi, lived here as a Shah).

The Palace of the Forty Columns marks the final stop for the day. It is a lovely pavilion that once was used to receive dignitaries. The roof was at one time waterproofed by using a fresh layer of beaten eggs which subsequently caused it to collapse.

**Accommodations:** Abassi Hotel

*“Though we travel the world over to find the beautiful,  
we must carry it with us or we find it or we find it not.”*

*- Ralph Waldo Emerson*

### Day 13 | Tehran

Today we return to Tehran. The drive will take us on an excursion to Abyaneh along the way. Abyaneh is a sleepy little ancient village located on the foot of Mt. Karkas with a maze of twisting lanes, crumbling red mud-brick houses featuring lattice windows, and wooden balconies. Time has stood still in Abyaneh where the elderly speak what is known as Middle Persian, an earlier incarnation of Farsi, the national language. Everywhere else in Iran, Middle Persian disappeared centuries ago - it is estimated that the village is at least 1,500 years old! Many of the people still wear the traditional clothing. Here, you will have the time to interact with the local people as you stroll through the village. You will find them to be very friendly and eager to engage you in conversations. We arrive back in Tehran in the late afternoon and return to the Laleh Hotel.

A special treat awaits this evening as we head for dinner to Divan. It is a Northern Tehran hotspot where the “whose who” can be found enjoying a Western cuisine surrounded by colorful contemporary art.

**Accommodations:** Laleh Hotel

### Day 14 | Mashad

A morning flight takes us to Mashad, Iran’s holiest and second-biggest city. Its raison d’être and main sight is the beautiful, massive and ever-growing Haram (shrine complex) commemorating the 817 AD martyrdom of Shia Islam’s eighth Imam, Imam Reza. The pain of Imam Reza’s death is still felt very personally over a millennium later and around 20 million pilgrims converge here each year to pay their respects (and no small amount of money) to the Imam. Witnessing their tears is a moving experience, even if you’re not a Muslim yourself. If you notice a lot of young couples, that’s because the city’s also a haven for honeymooners, who believe sharing it with the Imam will bless their marriage.

Afternoon city excursion.

**Accommodations:** Homa Hotel

### Day 15 | Tehran

This morning we will spend time at the shrine of Imam Reza. For many of our travelers, this is often one of the most heart warming experiences during our time in Iran. You will find the pilgrims as they mingle in the huge courtyard to be very friendly and inviting. Food is being offered to you, strangers will come and talk to you, and the call of the muezzin for prayer sets the backstage for it all. A true highlight of the journey and perfect end to your trip!

We take an evening flight back to Tehran.

**Accommodations:** Laleh Hotel

### Day 16 | Departure

You will be transferred to the airport for your departure flight.

**End of services.**

*The above is a sample itinerary which covers the highlights and also takes you off the beaten path. We would be happy to discuss your individual travel preferences and amend the itinerary accordingly.*

*Pricing is dependent on your choice of accommodations, time of the year that you will be traveling, the final itinerary, and the number of people in your group.*

*Should you wish to discuss your individual travel plans to Iran please do feel free to reach to us via e-mail at [info@authenticasia.net](mailto:info@authenticasia.net) or by phone at 1. 888.586.9958.*

## *A Timeline of Iran's History*

**550-330 BC** - Achaemenid dynasty rules the first Persian Empire. At its greatest extent under Darius I stretches from the Aegean Sea and Libya to the Indus Valley. The ruined city of Persepolis testifies to the grandeur of the first Persian Empire.

**492-479** - Persian attempts to conquer Greece fail.

**330** - Alexander the Great of Macedon conquers the Persian Empire, founding a short-lived empire before dying in Babylon in 323.

**312-140** - Most of Persia is part of the Greek-dominated (Hellenistic) Seleucid Empire, founded by a general of Alexander the Great.

**140 BC - 224 AD** - Persia - known as the Parthian Empire - under the rule of the Arsacid dynasty.

**224-651 AD** - Sassanid dynasty rules Persian Empire; Zoroastrianism is the dominant religion.

**636 AD** - Arab invasion brings end of Sassanid dynasty and start of Islamic rule.

**9th-13th century** - Decline of Islamic Caliphate, which is replaced by a series of Iranian and Turkic dynasties, including the Shia Buyids, the Seljuk Turks, and the Empire of Khwarezm.

**1220** - Mongol forces of Genghis Khan overrun Persia, which becomes part of the Ilkhanate, ruled by descendants of Genghis' grandson Hulagu.

**15th century** - Competing Iranian, Turkic, and Mongol dynasties, including the empire of Timur the Lame (Tamerlane) in eastern Iran.

**1501** - With the support of Shia Qizilbash warrior tribes, Shah Ismail I becomes first ruler of Islamic Safavid dynasty; Shia Islam declared state religion.

**1571-1629** Apogee of the Safavid Empire under Shah Abbas I, who reforms the army, sidelines the Qizilbash and establishes first diplomatic links with western Europe.

**1639** - Treaty of Qasr-e Shirin (or Treaty of Zuhab) ends about 150 years of war against Ottoman Empire.

**1736** - Nadir Shah deposes the last Safavid ruler and founds the short-lived Afsharid dynasty.

1751 - Karim Khan, of the Zand dynasty, briefly restores stability.

1794 - Mohammad Khan Qajar kills the last Zand shah and founds the Qajar dynasty, restoring stability to Iran after half a century of instability.

1828 - Iran cedes control of Caucasus to Russia after second Russo-Persian war. Shah Mohammad Reza, a close ally of the US, pursued a policy of modernisation and secularisation

1907 - Introduction of constitution which limits the absolutist powers of rulers.

1914-1918 - Iran declares neutrality but is scene of heavy fighting during World War I.

1921 February - Military commander Reza Khan seizes power.

1923 - Reza Khan becomes prime minister.

1925 December - Parliament votes to make Reza Khan ruler, deposing Ahmad Shah Qajar.

1926 April - Reza Khan crowned Reza Shah Pahlavi. Mohammad Reza, the Shah's eldest son, is proclaimed Crown Prince.

### Shah installed

1935 - Formerly known as Persia, Iran is adopted as the country's official name.

1979 **Revolution.** The 1979 revolution ended the Shah's increasingly autocratic rule and ushered in the Islamic Republic

1941 - The Shah's pro-Axis allegiance in World War II leads to the Anglo-Russian occupation of Iran and the deposition of the Shah in favour of his son, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi.

1950 - Ali Razmara becomes prime minister and is assassinated less than nine months later. He is succeeded by the nationalist, Mohammad Mossadeq.

1951 April - Parliament votes to nationalise the oil industry, which is dominated by the British-owned Anglo-Iranian Oil Company. Britain imposes an embargo and a blockade, halting oil exports and hitting the economy. A power struggle between the Shah and Mossadeq ensues and the Shah flees the country in August 1953.

**1953** August - Mossadeq is overthrown in a coup engineered by the British and American intelligence services. General Fazlollah Zahedi is proclaimed as prime minister and the Shah returns.

**1963** January - The Shah embarks on a campaign to modernise and westernise the country. He launches the 'White Revolution', a programme of land reform and social and economic modernisation. During the late 1960's the Shah became increasingly dependent on the secret police (SAVAK) in controlling those opposition movements critical of his reforms.

**1978** September - The Shah's policies alienate the clergy and his authoritarian rule leads to riots, strikes and mass demonstrations. Martial law is imposed.

**1979** January - As the political situation deteriorates, the Shah and his family are forced into exile.

**1979** November - Islamic militants take 52 Americans hostage inside the US embassy in Tehran. They demand the extradition of the Shah, in the US at the time for medical treatment, to face trial in Iran.

**1979** 1 February - The Islamic fundamentalist, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, returns to Iran following 14 years of exile in Iraq and France for opposing the regime.

**1979** 1 April - The Islamic Republic of Iran is proclaimed following a referendum.

**1980** July - The exiled Shah dies of cancer in Egypt.

**1980** 22 September - Start of Iran-Iraq war which lasts for eight years.

**1981** January - The American hostages are released ending 444 days in captivity.

**1985** - After the US and Soviet Union halted arms supplies, the US attempted to win the release of hostages in Lebanon by offering secret arms deals, this would later become known as the Iran-Contra affair.

**1988** July - 290 passengers and the crew of an Iran Air Airbus are mistakenly shot down by the USS Vincennes..

**1988** July - Iran accepts a ceasefire agreement with Iraq following negotiations in Geneva under the aegis of the UN.

**1989** February - Ayatollah Khomeini issues a religious edict (fatwa) ordering Muslims to kill British author, Salman Rushdie, for his novel, 'The Satanic Verses', considered blasphemous to Islam.

**1989** 3 June - Ayatollah Khomeini dies. On 4 June, President Khamene'i is appointed as new supreme leader.

**1989** August - Ali Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani is sworn in as the new president.

**1989** November - The US releases 567 million dollars of frozen Iranian assets.

**1990** June - A major earthquake strikes Iran, killing approximately 40,000 people.

**1990** - Iran remains neutral following Iraq's invasion of Kuwait.

**1990** September - Iran and Iraq resume diplomatic ties.

**1995** - US imposes oil and trade sanctions over Iran's alleged sponsorship of "terrorism", seeking to acquire nuclear arms and hostility to the Middle East process. Iran denies the charges.

**1997** May - Mohammad Khatami wins the presidential election with 70% of the vote, beating the conservative ruling elite.

**1998** September - Iran deploys thousands of troops on its border with Afghanistan after the Taliban admits killing eight Iranian diplomats and a journalist in Mazar-e Sharif.

**1999** July - Pro-democracy students at Tehran University demonstrate following the closure of the reformist newspaper 'Salam'. Clashes with security forces lead to six days of rioting and the arrest of more than 1,000 students.

**2000** February - Majlis elections. Liberals and supporters of Khatami wrest control of parliament from conservatives for the first time.

**2001** June - President Khatami re-elected.

**2002** January - US President George Bush describes Iraq, Iran, and North Korea as an "axis of evil", warning of the proliferation of long-range missiles being developed in these countries. The speech causes outrage in Iran and is condemned by reformists and conservatives alike.

**2002** September - Russian technicians begin construction of Iran's first nuclear reactor at Bushehr despite strong objections from US.

**2003** June - Thousands attend student-led protests in Tehran against clerical establishment.

**2003** September - UN nuclear watchdog, IAEA, gives Tehran weeks to prove it is not pursuing an atomic weapons program.

**2003** October - Shirin Ebadi becomes Iran's first Nobel Peace Prize winner; lawyer and human rights campaigner became Iran's first female judge in 1975 but was forced to resign after 1979 revolution.

**2003** November - Iran says it is suspending its uranium enrichment program and will allow tougher UN inspections of its nuclear facilities. IAEA concludes there is no evidence of a weapons program.

**2003** December - 40,000 people are killed in an earthquake in south-east Iran; the city of Bam is devastated.

**2004** February - Conservatives regain control of parliament in elections. Thousands of reformist candidates were disqualified by the hardline Council of Guardians before the polls.

**2007** June - Protests erupt after government imposes petrol rationing amid fears of possible UN sanctions.

**2007** July - Iran announces plans to stop making cars that only run on petrol and switch to dual-fuel vehicles, which also run on gas.

**2008** In an unprecedented move, President Ahmadinejad congratulates US president-elect Barack Obama on his election win. Mr. Obama has offered to open unconditional dialogue with Iran about its nuclear program.

Jailed Iranian-American journalist Roxana Saberi is freed and returns to US.

**2009** June - Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is declared to have won a resounding victory in the 12 June presidential election. The rival candidates challenge the result, alleging vote-rigging. Their supporters take to the streets, and at least 30 people are killed and more than 1,000 arrested in the wave of protests that follow.

**2009** August - Mahmoud Ahmadinejad sworn in for second term as president, presents cabinet - the first since the founding of the Islamic Republic in 1979 to include women.

**2011** August - Two US citizens arrested on the Iran-Iraq border in 2009 are found guilty of spying and sentenced to eight years in prison.

**2013** June - Reformist-backed cleric Hassan Rouhani wins presidential election, gaining just over 50% of the vote.

**2013** September - Iran frees 11 political prisoners, including reformist politician Mohsen Aminzadeh and prominent human rights lawyer Nasrin Sotoudeh.

President Rouhani tells US broadcaster NBC that Iran will never build nuclear weapons, and repeats offer of "time-bound and results-oriented" talks on the nuclear question in his address to the UN General Assembly.

**2013** November - Iran agrees to curb uranium enrichment above 5% and give UN inspectors better access in return for about \$7bn in sanctions relief at talks with the P5+1 group - US, Britain, Russia, China, France and Germany - in Geneva.

**2014** January - World powers and Iran begin implementing a deal on Iran's nuclear program following intense talks in Geneva.

**2014** April - The International Atomic Energy Agency says Iran has neutralized half of its higher-enriched uranium stockpile, as per a deal agreed earlier in the year.

**2014** June - President Rouhani says Iran is ready to assist the Iraqi government in its battle against extremist Sunni insurgents, amid reports that Iranian Revolutionary Guards are in Iraq providing military training and advice. The UK says it plans to re-open the British embassy in Tehran. Full diplomatic relations with Iran were suspended after attacks on the embassy in 2011.

**2014** July - The sixth and final round of nuclear negotiations between Iran and the P5+1 group begin in Vienna.

*Source: "Iran Profile." BBC News. 8 July 2014. Web. <<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-14542438>>.*