

## Isfahan Historical Background

Since location in the proximity of one of the largest rivers of the central plateau of *Iran*, *Esfahan* has a history as long as the land of *Iran*. Before the advent of royal system in *Iran* during the *Medes* (7<sup>th</sup> cent. BC.) it was the eastern border of this land, titled; *Anzan* and during her long history was called in different names as; *Aspahan*, originated from an ancient word (*Force*) *Aspâ* means *Asp*(horse), hence it was titled *Espahan*, in *Farsi* means the city of horse riders.

A city has a certified function as an invincible castle in the center of *Iran* and an alert depot to suppress any probable invasion at territorial borders. The city initiated with tiny colonies of residents with a gradual expansion as large as villages and in the course of time with an integrity of town with strong safeguard walls.

The first large city wall of *Esfahan* built during the *Sassanid Dynasty* by a ruler titled; *Azarshapouran* with 18000 steps of circumference (about 9 km.) equipped with four gates. By the expansion of *Esfahan* it was converted into an eight gated city during the *Seljuck Era* and a city with twelve gates in the *Safavid Period*.

The *Achaemenid Dynasty* assigned this city as one of the main centers of the government (*Satrap*). In the course of 25 centuries of recorded history during four different periods *Esfahan* functioned as the capital or the political center of *Iran*. Respectively during the *Ziarid* (9<sup>th</sup> cent.), the *Buied* (10<sup>th</sup> cent.), the *Seljuck* (11<sup>th</sup> cent.) and the *Safavid* (17<sup>th</sup> cent.) dynasties with a total period of three centuries that enhanced her zenith of stability, development, welfare and brilliance while the *Islamic Period* of her history was passed.

### Zayandeh Roud and its Historical Bridges

This river as the largest one in the central plateau of *Iran* originates from the *Zagross Mountain Range-Zard* (yellow color) *Kuh Bakhtiari* after the juncture of numerous fountains and catchments together moves from west to east passes through the center of *Iran* in a labyrinthine distance of 430 km. terminates at *Gav Khuni Marsh*. As we know majority of the ancient civilization formed in the proximity of rivers as a definite reason for a massive settlement of people.

The annual average discharge (debit) of the river is about 50 cubic meters per second consumed for cultivation, industry and drinking. There have existed many historical bridges on this river since past. At present a total number of 13 and in the city 5 historical ones available respectively from west to east of the city border they are called; *Marnan*, "*Sio-Se-Pol*", *Juie*, *Khajou* and *Shahrestan*. About each of them there is a description as follow:

### Ancient Fire Temple

About 8 kilometers distant west of *Esfahan* in the road between the city and *Najaf Abad* on the freeway– right side a hill comes into view with 3 hectares of covered area and a summit of 107 meters about the road. Geologically it dates about back into Cretaceous Period and Sediment Layers with orange color. The remains of a huge structure from the *Achaemenid Era* exist there– initially functioned as a huge 5 storey castle with two safe walls.

On the summit there still exists a cylindrical structure with 8 openings made of mud & straw as the firepot. The structure is made mud-bricks with a size of 40×40×9 all in centimeters reinforced with wooden reeds in between the layers, besides they functioned as insulators for leakage of humidity from the bottom to the top. If one buys an entrance ticket and climbs up to the top hill, a very spectacular landscape of *Esfahan* is visible there from an elevation of 1717 meters above sea-level– about 150 meters higher than the city center.

### **Pigeon Tower**

Among the extra-ordinary sites of *Esfahan* definitely pigeon towers are one of them in the city & in the proximity of *Esfahan* as a suitable place for visiting and getting fantastic ideas about them. Normally the one which is shown to the tourists is located in *Mardavij Ave.* by the same name, directed by municipality of *Esfahan* with a limited number of pigeon still living there.

The structure dates back to the early 17<sup>th</sup> century with a capacity of 15000 pigeons, for each one a private pigeon hole designed. The main idea to build these structures was to collect them in colonial spaces to gather their droppings as a suitable fertilizer containing great deal of nitrogen for the foliage of the plants. It is a cylindrical structure with 21 meters of height & a diameter at base about 16 meters made from mud & straw– as a semi-conductor material keeps cool in summer and warm in wintertime.

There exist some provisions to prevent the leakage of snakes & birds of pray for hunting pigeons to keep safe the area.

### **The Four Existing Historical “Jam-e-Mosques”**

As a visitor of an Islamic city if one likes to discover panoramic aspects of all dimensions from secular to spiritual about the people of that region at a glance, it is necessary to visit “Jam-e-Mosque” there. *Esfahan* enjoys four Jam-e-Mosque each of which, representative of a particular style of art and architecture in Iran. Chronologically they are titled; “Atiq Jam-e-Mosque”– on expressive of thirteen centuries of art, architecture, decoration & engineering, “Abbasi Jam-e-Mosque”– introduced as the massive power center in the square, “Hakim Jam-e-Mosque”– originates from twelve centuries ago with a main essence of the Safavid Period (17<sup>th</sup> century) and “Sayyed Jam-e-Mosque” as a typical mosque of the Qajar Era (19<sup>th</sup> century). Undoubted visiting these mosques would be very pleasurable both for the Muslims “& non-Muslims.

### **Minar Jonban (shaking minaret)**

About six kilometers distant west of *Esfahan* in the road between the city & *Najaf Abad* on the right of the free way there exist a building made from baked-bricks and plaster gypsum– a vaulted structure with twin minarets dates back to the early 14<sup>th</sup> century. It covers an area of 110 square meters over the tomb of *Amu Abdullah Karladani* a hermit and a mystic– built by his followers. If a person goes on the rooftop and climb up through the spiral stairway (narrow) to the top of one minarets and takes the opening at hand and start to shake it two amazing items are observed; First it is shaken without collapse & second the other one shakes spontaneously. To brief these phenomena, the whole structure functions as a homogenous body & vibration

transfer in the other minaret & the whole structure from the rooftop to the floor is based on the model of tuning fork & a resonance box.

In the end we wish this brief introduction would pave the way to host you in Esfahan to visit hundreds of tourist attractions in this utopia and bright city of Iran.