

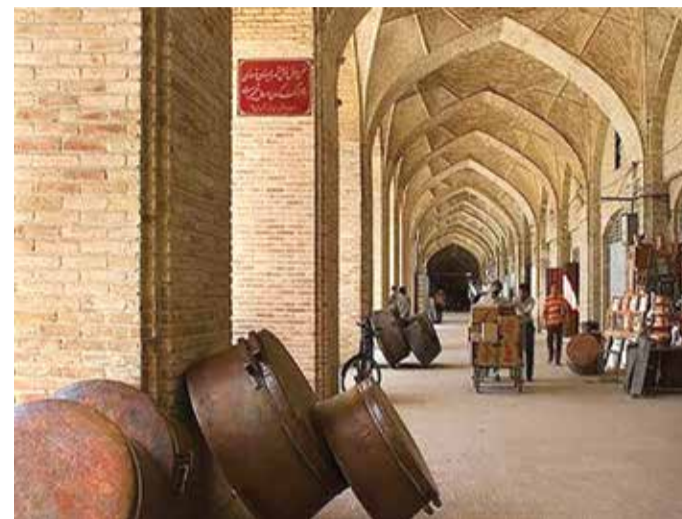
Bustling Kerman Grand Bazaar, a vibrant hub of commerce and culture



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The Grand Bazaar of Kerman, a desert city located in the southeast of Iran, is one of the country's most interesting bazaars to visit. Considered by UNESCO as the second largest bazaar of the country, it is one of the main tourist attractions of the city as well as its beating heart. Comprised of several bazaars built over centuries, it reflects the rich architecture and artistic traditions of ancient Persia. In this article, you will see why you shouldn't miss your chance to visit Kerman's Grand Bazaar, surfiran.com wrote.

Anything can be found in Iranian bazaars. They are busy crowded places, where locals and tourists come

to do their shopping. But Kerman's bazaar takes the experience to a higher level, as it's one of Iran's largest bazaars. It's a cluster of narrow alleys, high-ceilinged courtyards, encompassing caravanserais and bathhouses. From Persian carpets to intricate metalwork, the Kerman Grand Bazaar offers a wealth of unique souvenirs.

Not yet recognized as a world heritage site, Kerman's Grand Bazaar is on the tentative list to become a UNESCO site, as the complex is one of Iran's most beautiful bazaars and a "masterpiece [that] proves man's creativity". In time, the bazaar has become a real cultural landmark of Kerman, mentioned in many local proverbs and is still

as alive today as it was centuries ago.

The construction of Kerman's Grand Bazaar started 600 years ago, under the Timurid Dynasty, a Persian-Turco-Mongol Empire that ruled over the region in the 15th century. This empire, whose capitals were Samarkand and Herat, was famous for bringing Islamic art to its pinnacle, which can be perceived in Kerman's bazaar. Over the centuries, various parts were added, most under the Safavid era (1501-1732 CE), giving the bazaar the blend of various architectures we know today.

Like other Iranian bazaars, Kerman's Grand Bazaar is comprised of several sections. The most famous is



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the Ganjali Khan Complex, which is the heart of the bazaar. Built around a square, the complex has a stunning Safavid architecture, with delicate tile work, as well as paintings that display the daily lives of people under this dynasty. Inside the complex is a caravanserai, a bathhouse, and a mosque.

Another important area is Chahar Sooq

that marks the intersection of the two main bazaar alleys, and was thus once the busiest point of the city. Dating back 400 years, it is beautifully decorated. Arg Bazaar is another major market, with beautiful high ceilings, where music once played to announce the market's closure.

Then comes the Vakil Complex, which con-

tains a bazaar, a caravanserai, a mosque, and a bathhouse, considered one of the most beautiful from the Qajar era. Finally, Ekhtiari Bazaar is another must see of Kerman's Grand Bazaar. It's the oldest part of the bazaar, and contains a mosque, a caravanserai, and a bathhouse, now turned into a cozy teahouse.

What's famous in Kerman's Grand Bazaar?

Strolling into the alleys of Kerman's Bazaar, be sure to get your hands on some local specialties. Kerman is well-known for its spices, coming from southeast Iran and India, and for cumin. Pistachios cultivated in the region are among the best in the

world. Once famous for its carpets, during the 17th century, Kerman remains a great place to find antique pieces. It's also famous for copper, coming from the Sarcheshmeh Copper Mine in the region. Don't miss tasting some local sweets while in Kerman's bazaar, such as *kolompeh* (walnut and date cookies), *qottab* (pistachio and walnut pastries), and *komach sehen* (date-filled pie).

Shop for handmade jewelry, pottery and other crafts made by local artisans at the Kerman Grand Bazaar.

Best times to visit

Kerman's Grand Bazaar is located in the center of the city, starting from the Arg Square and continuing until

Mirza Reza Kermani Street. Its main entrances are Arg Gate and Mosque Gate, which were once the city's gates.

The bazaar is open every day from 9 a.m. to 9:30 p.m., except on Fridays and national holidays when all shops are closed. The best time to visit the bazaar is either in the morning, when merchants start to open their shops and the market starts being busy but isn't yet too crowded, and after 5 p.m. when it is full of life.

You can wander into the alleys to explore Kerman's Grand Bazaar, but the best way to visit it is to hire a local guide who will show you amazing places you might not discover otherwise.

Calligraphy, an important fine art in the East

Nasta'liq calligraphy, Mir Emad
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While in the West calligraphy is considered mainly penmanship, in the East it is one of the most important fine arts.

Calligraphers were an essential requirement for any self-respecting court, and very often princes and nobles practiced calligraphy themselves. Moreover, prohibition against figurative art in mosques, and with an emphasis put on literacy and knowledge, Islamic leaders imparted further importance to the written word in the Islamic world, vipemo.com wrote.

Broadly speaking, there were two distinct scripts in the early centuries of Islam: Cursive script and Kufic script. For everyday purposes a cursive script was employed, while Kufic script was used for religious and official functions. Kufic went out of general use in about the 11th century, though it continued to be used in the decoration of monumental religious buildings. About 1,000 CE, a new script – naskh – was established. This has remained the most popular script in the Arab world. The other main styles were Thuluth, Reyhan, Mo-haqqaq, Towqi, and Reqa. Arabic script was adopted in Iran soon after the Muslim conquest, and was enhanced and developed by the Persians soon after. In the 13th century, Iranian scribes invented

Nasta'liq calligraphy, Alireza Abbasi
wikimedia.org

Taliq, and in the next century, Mir Ali Tabrizi, the most famous calligrapher of the Timurid period, created Nasta'liq, a combination of Naskh and Taliq.

Nasta'liq is closely connected to Persian poetry and has played an important role in communicating poetic concepts to readers. Under the Timurid and the Safavid rulers, calligraphy experienced its highest stage of development. The most famous calligraphers of the Safavid court were Mir Emad and Alireza Abbasi.

Alireza Abbasi

Born in Kashan, Ali Reza Abbasi (1565-1634 CE) is one of the

most important calligraphers of the Safavid period. As soon as he became a remarkable calligrapher, he left Kashan for Isfahan. He was introduced to Shah Abbas, the first court. Soon he was honored with the title "Abbasi". He was busy at the Shah's court, but soon left the court. In 1610, he returned to the court and worked there until his death in 1634. He was also a wonderful miniaturist. A part of the lobby of the Ali Qapu Palace was decorated with stuccoes with his beautiful, unique miniatures. Much of his work can be seen in Iranian museums and major museums of the West, such as the Louvre.

Mir Emad

Mir Emad (1556-1615 CE) was one of the most famous Iranian calligraphers. Nostalgic calligraphy reached its zenith through wonderful works by Mir Emad. He was born and trained in Qazvin. Mir Emad traveled to Tabriz to develop his knowledge and his art, studying under Mohammad Hossein. He was invited to the court of Shah Abbas, where he tried to train his son and daughter as calligraphers, but they did not reach as high a level as Mir Emad. A part of the inscriptions of Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque in Isfahan was implemented by Mir Emad.