

Exploring Tehran's hidden heritage

Iranica Desk

In the heart of modern Tehran, traces of a distant past still remain hidden; the bazaars, tea houses, homes, and neighborhoods remind us of the glorious times of old Tehran. These forgotten attractions showcase the authentic history and culture of the capital with their unique architecture and warm atmosphere, offering a nostalgic experience for those interested in the city's heritage.

Old bazaars

The Oudlajan Bazaar is one of the oldest and most traditional bazaars in Tehran. Located near the Grand Bazaar, it features small shops in a charming, traditional space. In ancient times, it was a bustling marketplace where residents from surrounding neighborhoods came to buy their daily necessities. Today, after significant renovations, the Oudlajan Bazaar continues to welcome visitors, and in every corner, one can sense the aroma and spirit of life in old Tehran. If you want to stroll through the heart of Tehran and trace history in its alleyways, the Oudlajan neighborhood is an ideal destination.

You can reach this bazaar via the Imam Khomeini Metro Station and walk a few minutes to the heart of Oudlajan Bazaar, IRNA wrote. The Qavam al-Doleh Bazaar, located in the city center, still evokes the atmosphere of traditional bustling businesses. Also known as Shapur Bazaar and Tarkhani Bazaar, this small bazaar was once one of the city's most important commercial centers. Built during the Qajar era, it was listed as a national heritage site in Iran in 2003. You can take the metro to Has-sanabad Station and walk a bit to reach this bazaar.



Oudlajan Bazaar



Haj Ali Darvish Tea House

Tea Houses

The Azeri Tea House, located near Railway Square, transports you to past decades. This venue is one of the few traditional tea houses in Tehran, and its décor, slender tea glasses, and old architecture create an authentic atmosphere for those interested in Iranian culture and customs. It remains a gathering place for people who want to enjoy tea and

savor the taste of excellent dizi in a warm and intimate setting, away from the city's hustle and bustle. To access this location, simply take the metro or bus to Rahahan Square and walk a little to find it. Haj Ali Darvish Tea House, considered the smallest in the world, is nestled in one of the corridors of the Tehran Grand Bazaar. This cozy coffee house, registered as a national heritage site in 2016, spans

approximately two square meters and has become an attractive spot for tea drinkers and regular customers of the bazaar. With a history of over 100 years, it serves as a nostalgic place filled with memories, welcoming passersby and loyal patrons. To reach it, enter the Grand Bazaar and head to the goldsmiths' alley, asking vendors for directions to Haj Ali Darvish Tea House.

Historical neighborhoods

Sangelay neighborhood is one of the oldest and most historical areas of Tehran, retaining its traditional alleys and houses with central courtyards and brick walls. Notable attractions here include the Mostoufi ol-Mamalek House, Sorp Georges Church, Sangelay Theatre, Shahr Park, and Sheikh Fazlollah House. To access Sangelay, you can get off at Has-sanabad, Imam Khomeini, or Khayyam metro stations and reach the neighborhood by walking or taking a taxi. Qadim (Old) Lalehzar was once a vibrant street and a cultural hub in Tehran, hosting cinemas, cafés, and stylish shops

during the Qajar and Pahlavi eras. However, urban changes led to the decline of Lalehzar, and many of its buildings were forgotten. Today, walking through this street reveals its proud past. Old Lalehzar is located between Toopkhaneh Square and Jomhuri Street, remaining a sight for those interested in old architecture and Tehran's culture. Masoudiyeh Mansion, a remnant from the Qajar period, is one of Tehran's famous historical buildings. With its traditional bricks, beautiful plasterwork, and spacious courtyards, it reflects the art and Iranian-Islamic architecture of its time. Once a site for political meet-

ings and a stronghold for the Constitutionalists against Mohammad Ali Shah, the mansion is located near Baharestan Square, offering a journey into a distant past. Moghadam House, situated on Imam Khomeini Street, is a historical gem from the Qajar era that functions as a museum due to its unique architecture, antique objects, and decorations. The owner, Mohsen Moghadam, was a professor at the University of Tehran who collected many historical artifacts. Visiting this museum house will deepen your understanding of Iran's history and art.



Sangelay neighborhood



Nasr Theater

Theaters and cultural halls

Not so long ago, theaters and cultural halls in Tehran were popular gathering spots for artists, writers, and art enthusiasts, playing a crucial role in the city's cultural scene. Among these historic venues, Nasr Theater and the Grand Hotel on Lalehzar Street are particularly well-known. The Grand Hotel, constructed in the late Qajar period, served as a venue for theater performances, poetry readings, and cultural events, recognized at

the time as one of Tehran's most modern cultural centers. Unfortunately, it now stands in a state of disrepair. Nasr Theater, which dates back to the late Qajar period, became a prominent center for the performing arts during the Pahlavi era, hosting many notable Iranian artists. Today, this building is undergoing renovations to be transformed into a theater and museum, offering a unique opportunity for art and history enthusiasts to experience the cultural atmosphere of old Tehran.

Historical bathhouses

Navab Bathhouse and Khanoom Bathhouse are historic yet lesser-known structures in Tehran, each showcasing unique architecture and rich stories. Navab Bathhouse, located in the Imamzadeh Yahya neighborhood, dates back to the Qajar period. Khanoom Bathhouse, also known as Qibleh Bathhouse, is situated in one of Tehran's old alleys. Its small and charming space transports visitors to a time when public bathhouses were centers of social interaction and community conversation.

Historical mosques and religious sites

Old Tehran was filled with mosques and sacred places, each embodying the beliefs and lives of the people of that time through their unique architecture and history. Sepahsalar Mosque, also known as Shaheed Motahhari School and Mosque, is one of the largest in Tehran, built during the Qajar period. Its magnificent architecture and extraordinary tile decorations symbolize the splendor of Islamic-Iranian art. The shrine of Imamzadeh Yahya, located in one of Tehran's old neighborhoods, is another important religious site. With its spiritual and tranquil atmosphere, it continues to attract

visitors and enthusiasts of religious history and architecture. Visiting these places offers an opportunity to understand the spiritual and cultural depth of Tehran, providing deeper insights into its religious and historical identity. Exploring Tehran's forgotten attractions allows for a journey into the city's rich history amidst the chaos of modern life, offering a close experience of its invaluable relics. These sites not only narrate the culture and life of the past but also forge an unbreakable bond with the identity of Tehran and its people, presenting a window into the glorious days of the capital that truly deserve to be revisited.

Old gardens and parks

Amid the hustle and bustle of Tehran, old gardens and parks with ancient trees and serene atmospheres still hold a special place in the hearts of residents. Ferdows Garden, built during the Qajar era, served as a residence and recreational spot for princes and dignitaries. With its tranquil environment and beautiful fountains, it remains one of the city's pleasant

places for relaxation and exploration. Negarestan Garden, established during the reign of Fat'hali Shah Qajar, was once a retreat for the royal family and now welcomes visitors interested in history and nature. Often overlooked by the general public, these gardens provide a green and nostalgic environment for experiencing tranquility and discovering the history of Tehran.



Sepahsalar Mosque