



Mashq Square

# Mashq Square in Tehran's historical heart

## Iranica Desk

If you wander through the alleys and streets of Tehran and find yourself in the heart of Iran's capital, you will see one of the oldest and most adventurous places in history, which embodies history, culture, beauty, art, and architecture: Mashq Square! Go to Mashq Square in the capital, a square with many historical stories. It is the only one that currently bears no resemblance to a square. Once you pass the National Garden Gate (Sardar-e Bagh-e Melli), with its magnificence, through the sound of horns and the continuous passing of cars and the noise of the street, there is no longer any news of that hustle and bustle, nor of disorder and noise. This gate has done its job and suddenly throws you into a slice of history.

## From military grounds to National Garden

Mashq Square is a relic from the Qajar era, originally serving as a military zone where the Shah's guards would practice military exercises. The term *mashq* means marching in French, which was adopted into Persian. Its name is due to its history of military training and exercises. After the February 1921 coup, the military grounds were no longer needed, so Reza Shah ordered the construction of the National Garden Gate in this location. Flower cultivation in the square led it to

be called the National Garden. After the plan to establish the first public garden in the lands of Mashq Square was planned and implemented, the name of Mashq Square was changed to the National Garden.

## A grand entrance

The National Garden Gate is known as the entrance to the Mashq Square, or today's National Garden, and it can be considered the first structure that attracts your attention. The construction of the entrance, in collaboration with Jafarkhan Kashani and Germans, took place from 1922 to 1925. The width of the entrance originally included two guard and inspection rooms, measuring around 27 meters from east to west, but over time, one of the rooms became part of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company building, while the other was allocated to the Tehran Post Office and later demolished. The columns on the external facade feature designs symbolizing the 1921 coup and the takeover of Tehran.

## A hub of activity and transition

In addition to military objectives, Mashq Square was influential in the political, religious, social, and sporting lives of the people of that era, hosting many religious celebrations. Interestingly, the grounds of Mashq Square were also the site

of some of the earliest sports in Iran, such as the English Embassy staff's football matches, the first cycling completions by Tehran cyclists, as well as the launch of Tehran's first balloon and its subsequent crash.

The square, located on the western side of Imam Khomeini Square (formerly Toopkhaneh Square), includes a collection of museums and important buildings such as the Post and Communication Museum, Etrat Museum, Coin Museum, National Museum of Iran, Malek National Museum, Faculty of Arts, and the building of the first National Oil Company of Iran. The central pedestrian walkway of Mashq Square, also known as the "United Nations" walkway, is the most vast and extensive urban pedestrian zone in Iran, and the square itself is a collection of wonders and tourist attractions. Each of the buildings in Mashq Square in Tehran has been constructed with a unique and distinct style.

The oldest building in the complex is the Qazaq Khaneh (Cossack Quarters), now the University of Art, and the newest is the Malek National Library and Museum. This museum and its library were endowed by Hajj Hossein Malek, Iran's greatest benefactor. The administration of this museum and library is now carried out by Astan Quds Razavi, and it is one of the most exquisite museums in Iran. The first aircraft seen in Iran, piloted by the Pol-

ish pilot Kozminski during World War I, landed in today's Mashq Square on January 4, 1914; as soon as the plane landed, people came to this spot in surprise and fear.

## Mashq Square today

Mashq Square, a historical and vast complex in the heart of Tehran, was once a military shooting range during the Qajar era. It features magnificent historical and cultural buildings, making it a potential tourist destination. This historical building was registered as one of Iran's national monuments on October 4, 1998. According to historical researcher Hamid Naseri Kermanshahi, Mashq Square during the Safavid period was a flat area outside the city, approximately 25 hectares in size, surrounded by many trees and used for military exercises. Eskandar Mokhtari, another historical researcher, suggests that upgrading Mashq Square requires freeing the surrounding areas and transforming the square into a public urban space to attract more tourists. Located in the city center, Mashq Square is close to many tourist attractions, including the Tehran Bazaar and Golestan Palace. Building number nine of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the University of Art, the Malek National Museum, the Post and Communications Museum, and the National Museum are also situated in the compound.



National Garden Gate



Malek National Library and Museum



Qazaq Khaneh

## Legends, history of Bampour Castle in Iranshahr

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Bampour Castle in Iranshahr is one of the most significant fortifications in Sistan and Baluchestan Province. Perched atop a manmade hill, it was originally constructed as a military base, strategically positioned to defend against enemy attacks. The

castle's history is believed to date back to the Sassanid dynasty, supported by the existence of similar structures such as Qaleh Dokhtar in Kerman Province and Qaleh Bam, which belong to the same era. In 1960, an English archaeologist excavated parts of Bampour Castle, uncovering artifacts from the prehistoric period.

Beyond historical documents, the castle's legacy is also woven into local legends. According to these tales, the name Bampour is linked to the word Bahman, which gradually evolved into Bamanpour. Constructed from cob bricks and clay, Bampour Castle features cylindrical towers on its western

and eastern walls. Of the original four guard towers, only two remain, each standing approximately two meters tall. A well is located within the castle, which is situated on a manmade hill rising to about eighty meters. The castle is divided into three sections: the lower, middle, and upper areas. The lower section

includes the main walls, entrance and exit doorways, and protective towers. The middle section houses residential chambers, while the upper section was reserved for generals. In the upper section, a deep well can be found, which once featured a cobblestone path providing an escape route during sieges.

Although this path has since been filled with sand and soil, the well itself remains visible. War cannons were positioned in the largest tower of Bampour Castle, and a series of rooms can be found on the southern side of the courtyard. Additionally, the castle's citadel contains a row of windowed rooms.

