

Iranian culture

Religion :

Zoroastrianism was the national faith of Iran for more than a millennium before the Arab conquest. It has had an immense influence on Iranian philosophy, culture and art after the people of Iran converted to Islam, and now ,at least 90 percent of Iranians are Shia Muslims. Approximately 8 percent are Sunni Muslims. There are smaller numbers of Baha'is, Armenian and Assyrian Christians, Jews, and Zoroastrians.

Holiday :

Iran uses the Persian calendar with twelve months which differ from Western cultures. Festival of NoRooz is Persian celebration of New Year's, or the Spring equinox (around March 21st on western calendars.)

It is the most cherished and most celebrated holiday.

The preparation for No Rooz starts well before the actual date and the event itself lasts 13 days. It is customary for all to take a bath and cleanse themselves thoroughly before No Rooz. This is supposed to be a purification rite but modern times have lost the meaning. On the last Tuesday of the year, before No Rooz, Iranians carry out spring cleaning and set up bonfires for the night. This symbolizes the welcoming for the return of the departed souls.



Haft-Seen (Persian:) or the seven 'S's is a traditional table setting of Nowruz, the traditional Iranian spring celebration. The haft seen table includes seven items all starting with the letter seen (س) in the Persian alphabet.. The Haft Chin table includes the following items which symbolize Zoroastrian yazatas or divinities such as :

1. Mirror - symbolizing Sky
2. Apple - symbolizing Earth
3. Candles - symbolizing Fire
4. Golab - rose water symbolizing Water
5. Sabzeh - wheat, or barley sprouts symbolizing Plants
6. Goldfish - symbolizing Animals
7. Painted Eggs - symbolizing Humans and Fertility

Concept of Work/Play/Time

The work week in Iran is Saturday through Thursday. However, many government offices and private companies are closed on Thursdays. Friday is a public holiday for all establishments to attend the

mosque for religious purposes. Offices are generally open to the Public in the morning hours only.

Language/Communication

Official language of government and courts is Persian and it is the native tongue of over half the population. Because it is an Indo-European language it is an easier language for English speaking people to learn compared to other languages

of the Middle East. Persian is written from right to left in the Arabic script.

Very conservative Muslims may avoid shaking hands or kissing unrelated individuals from the opposite sex. It is well accepted for individuals of the same sex to kiss on both cheeks, hold, embrace and hug each other whether they are

Related or not. Dressing up formally and appropriately is also regarded as a sign of respect and people may get offended if their guests arrive in casual outfits and sneakers. People are anticipated to behave politely at parties, being loud is

Considered inappropriate unless people know each other very well. People stand up when new guests arrive except with the elderly who will remain seated. Sometimes women will only stand up when other females arrive.

Done by Mahla M. Mrk460MT March 2013