

National Getaways for the Weary Trauma Surgeon; Part 4: The Silk Road Trip

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Another trip for the weary and tired trauma surgeon fond of travelling and sightseeing is the Silk Road trip (1).

This 7-day vacation follows the route of the ancient Silk Road; an 892 km road trip from Tehran to Mashhad (Figure 1).

The trip from Tehran to the northeastern cities of

Iran passes through the cities of Shahr-e-rey, Semnan, Damghan, Shahrood, Sabzevar, and Neyshaboor; the final destination is Mashhad. These cities are interesting places to visit and my advice is to “not push it.” This is not an operation; you should drive safely and leisurely and rest at several rest areas on the way (2).



Figure 1. The Road map From Tehran to Mashhad, an 892 km Journey

The number of interesting places to see are so numerous that they cannot be covered in this short editorial. You may arrange your itinerary based on your preference through the internet; this may be an experience of a lifetime.

The journey begins from Tehran and goes through Semnan and Damghan. The first stop is the city of Shahrood; where you can take time to stop and enjoy the beautiful vista of Iran's landscapes (Figure 2).

There is a hotel in Bastam near Shahrood 8 km outside the city; and though just a three-star hotel, it is actually quite nice. You can spend the night there and get a cabbie to show you around the next day. Let your money do the talking (Figure 3).

After a good night's rest the drive continues north-east to Sabzevar, 200-km from Shahrood. It is wise to stop every two to three hours, take refreshments and rest a bit until you reach the city. You can stay the night or continue the drive to Neyshaboor where you can stay the night there or opt to drive to the holy city Mashhad, just another 140-km drive (Figure 4).

Some of the best 5-star hotels in Iran are in Mashhad; it is best to make reservations beforehand. Upon arrival, check-in and relax, go for a swim in the hotel spa or pool. You can arrange a deal with a cabbie to take you to the interesting places and historical sites of the city. They know the routes best and can recommend the best cuisines. You can check your emails in the evening after returning to the hotel. Then, "Google" for interesting places to shop, eat and chill out.

You can visit Imam Reza's Holy Shrine at any time of the day or night. The shrine of the eighth Imam of Shiite Muslims is very popular with Iranians and Muslims from all over the world, especially Arab countries (Figure 5).



Figure 2. A Parking Spot Aside a Road Near Damghan; A City Famous for Its Pistachios



Figure 3. The Hotel at the Entrance to Shahrood City



Figure 4. A Photo of Mashhad From a 17-Story Hotel Room

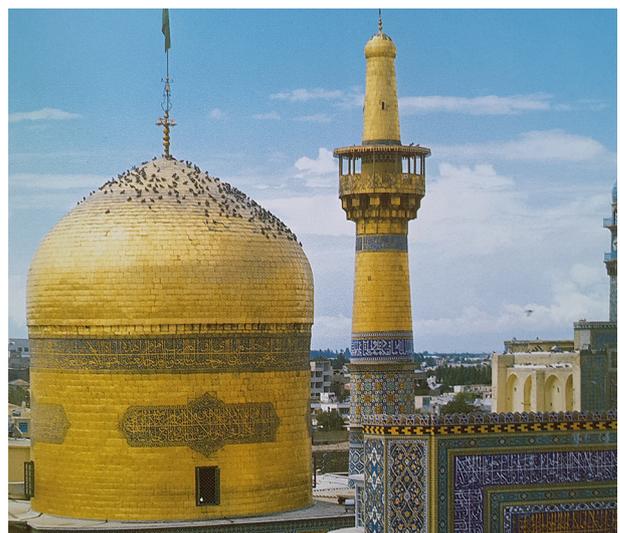


Figure 5. Imam Reza Holy Shrine

On day 3, plan to see the city and places of interest (Figures 6 and 7).

On day 4, if you bypassed Neyshaboor, plan a day trip to Neyshaboor; there are several interesting places to see there such as the Sheikh Atar mausoleum, Kamalolmolk mausoleum, Omar Khayyam mausoleum and the Mota-medi Wood Garden (Figure 8).

Neyshaboor is famous for its precious stones like Firuzeh or turquoise. There are several small turquoise factories and shops in Neyshaboor to visit (a must see).

It is a mineral changing color by the quantity of either its copper or aluminum. In buying this stone remember that it is not a very precious stone and you might not be able to resell it (Figure 9).

After lunch in Neyshaboor, return to Mashhad and take the rest of the day to relax in the lounge, take a nap, go to the fitness center or the hotel pool.

On day 5 you can return to Tehran; after breakfast the return journey begins; I recommend a night's stay in Semnan. There is a beautiful hotel in Shahmirzad 25 km from Semnan, Figure 10.



Figure 8. Attar Neyshaboori and Kamalolmolk Mausoleums



Figure 6. Kuhsangi Park, Mashhad



Figure 9. A Turquoise Factory, the Stones Are Cut and Polished Here



Figure 7. The Mausoleum of Ferdosi, Just Outside of Mashhad, a Must Visit Place



Figure 10. Hotel in Shahmirzad. A Mountainous Climate With Fresh Air, Famous for Its Delicious Lamb Meat Cuisine



Figure 11. Historic Entrance to the Semnan Citadel

Shahmirzad is located in a valley with a river; it is a beautiful place to stay in Semnan, take a cabbie to show you several interesting places in the city and enjoy local cuisines, especially the famous “vegetable bread” of Semnan (Figure 11).

On day 6, after a good night’s rest and breakfast, drive back to Tehran, one day before going back to work; this helps to relax from the drive and catch-up with your emails!

On Day 7, you can go back to work reinvigorated, “batteries recharged” and fresh with fond memories to share with colleagues and incentive to work and endure stress (3).

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