Major Cities and Historic Sites

**Tehran** – the capital since 1795 – is the largest city of Iran with metropolitan area population of 15 million. Tehran is famous for its numerous ski resorts on the Alborz slopes, large museums, art centers, and palace complexes.

**Esfahan** is the third largest city of Iran. In 16th century it was one of the largest cities in the world. Today, the city retains much of its past glory. It is famous for its Islamic architecture, with many beautiful boulevards, covered bridges, palaces, mosques, and minarets. Esfahan has long been one of the centers for production of the famous Persian Rug, textiles, steel, and handicrafts.

**Shiraz** is the sixth most populous city with history of more than 4000 years based on cuneiform records. The oldest sample of wine in the world, dating to approximately 7000 years ago, was also discovered on clay jars recovered outside of Shiraz. In the 13th century, it became a leading center of the arts and letters.

**Persepolis**. Not far from Shiraz the remains of glorious days of Persia, Persepolis, still exist. Persepolis was the ceremonial capital during the Achaemenid dating back to 515 BC. Archaeologists believe that Cyrus the Great chose the site of Persepolis, and Darius the Great built the terrace and palaces. The city was burnt down after invading Persia by Alexander the Macedonian in 330 BC.

**Yazd** has a 3000 year long history, dating back to the time of the Median Empire. It is of foremost importance as a centre of Persian architecture. Because of its climate, it has one of the largest networks of Qanats - underground water system - in the world. To deal with the extremely hot summers, many buildings have magnificent wind catchers and large underground areas.

**Arg-é Bam** (Bam citadel) was the largest adobe building in the world, located in Bam, a city in the Kerman province of Iran. This enormous citadel on the Silk Road was built before 500 BC and remained in use until 1850 AD.

Some of the Iranian Contributors to Human Civilization in the History

**Cyrus the Great** founded the Persian Empire in 550 BC by conquering the Median Empire. Cyrus the Great created the Cyrus Cylinder, considered to be the first declaration of human rights and today is kept in the British Museum.

**Al-Khwârizmî** (780 – 850) was a Persian astronomer, mathematician, and geographer. He wrote “Al-jabr Wa-L-muqâbala”, the first book on the systematic solution of linear and quadratic equations. He is considered to be the father of algebra. The words algorithm stem from Algoritmi, the Latinization of his name.

**Razi** (864 – 930) was active in medicine, mathematics, astronomy, chemistry, philosophy and music. His book “Al-Hawi” was the largest medical encyclopedia composed by then. As a chemist, he was the first to produce sulfuric acid together with some other acids, and he also prepared alcohol by fermenting sweet products.

**Avicenna** - Ibn Sina (980 – 1037) made great contributions to the fields of medicine, philosophy and science. He was the author of 450 books on a wide range of subjects. From the 12th to the 17th century he was the guide of medical study in European universities. George Sarton (the Belgian-American historian of science) called him “The most famous scientist of Islam and one of the most famous of all races, places, and times”.