

Friday, February 27, 2026 – Tehran, Iran

After being home for a few weeks from our last trip to New Zealand, we felt we needed to go on another trip. We found a very inexpensive trip, which should have been our first tip-off, to Iran. We arrived on Friday afternoon and soon found ourselves in what seemed like a drum festival but was instead a full-on war.



*Before*

unbelievable. The US dollar is extremely strong right now, since the Iranian rial has lost 99% of its value since the mullahs took over in 1979. Carpets, spices, copperware, tea sets, everything is pennies on the dollar. The merchants wanted to sell me everything. I'm not sure if I look particularly American or if I was just the only one asking, "Is there Wi-Fi?"

Saturday, February 28, 2026 – Isfahan, Iran

We were advised to leave Tehran as quickly as possible, so we went to Isfahan. There used to be a square there, the vast Naqsh-e Jahan Square. No more. What was once surrounded by mosques, palaces, and markets is now a big hole in the ground. The blue tile work at the Shah Mosque, which was so intricate, is now scattered throughout the city. In fact, most of the buildings here are now piles of broken concrete. For lunch we tried to go out for the famous Persian kebabs. We heard there are more varieties of kebabs than I have passwords. Unfortunately, all the restaurants with high ratings on TripAdvisor were either closed or flattened. We're still hunting for a decent meal.



*After*

We're going to the airport now to find another country more welcoming to tourists. Even though we found the people of Iran to be very warm and hospitable, the areas we wanted to visit seem very dilapidated and not kept up very well. Everywhere we went looks like the ancient ruins we've seen in other parts of the world.

Would we go back? Absolutely, but not before they put some money back into the infrastructure. We've also learned an important lesson: next time a trip seems like a great deal, we're going to check the news first for any recent events.

Saturday, February 28, 2026 – Gaza Strip

Thanks to everyone that emailed us back with your concerns. We were able to catch the last flight out of Iran last night to the Gaza Strip and are now safely checked into our hotel beyond the yellow line in Gaza. The local people don't seem to be as nice as the Iranians, but the food is better. The shawarma and hummus in the United Nations humanitarian aid boxes is delicious. Also, the sightseeing here is plentiful, as there are more ruins here than in Iran. However, I think Iran will be catching up quickly.

Love, Stephen and Lori