

Ferdowsi University of Mashhad  
Centre for Teaching Persian Language  
International Student Handbook  
2017/2018

## The International Center for Teaching Persian to Non-Persian Speakers

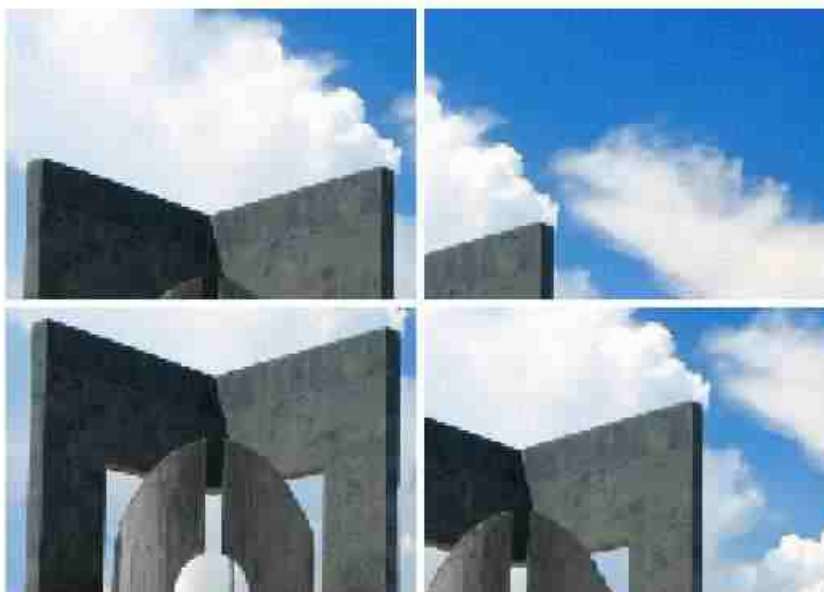


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“Studying Persian at Ferdowsi University was an unique opportunity to learn, especially by speaking to new friends!”

- Anna K.



## Introduction

This handbook is aimed at delivering information to international students to prepare them for their course in Mashhad. The sections clarify the administrative process such as the enrolment with the Center, the visa application and the services provided by the Center. It also provides advise on the practical day-to-day life in the University Campus and explains some cultural features in order to help students feel more comfortable at the beginning of their trip.

The International Center for Teaching Persian to Non-Persian Speakers is an on-campus center focuses on the ever increasing need of international students and Persian culture and language enthusiasts. CTPL is your partner for learning Persian successfully through qualified instruction. Learning Persian in Ferdowsi University is a opportunity to combine learning with leisure time, including meeting new international friends. For more information, please follow the link [ctpl.um.ac.ir](http://ctpl.um.ac.ir) .

The International Center for Teaching Persian to Non-Persian Speakers is Dr Ehsan Ghabool, from the Department of Persian Language and Literature. Email for contact: [ehsan.ghabool@um.ac.ir](mailto:ehsan.ghabool@um.ac.ir) .

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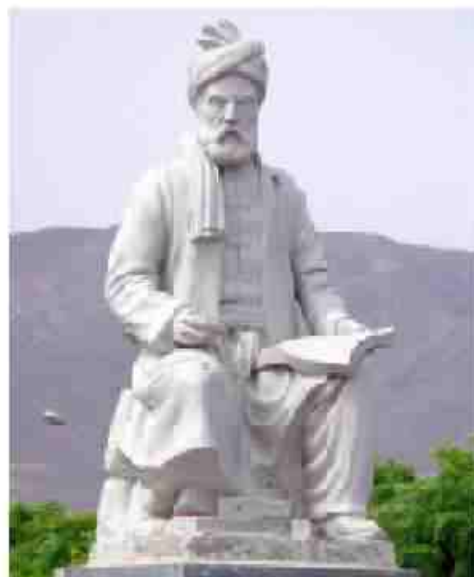
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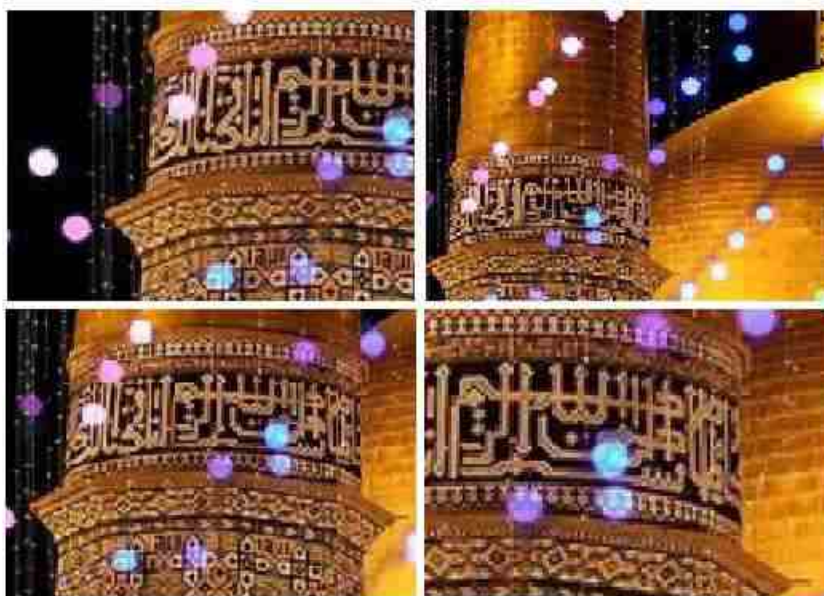
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“Whatever you are interested to learn, such as music, calligraphy or sports, there are ways to learn more about it.”

- Anna K.



## 1. Prior to your departure

### Enrolement to the Center

The Center will provide you an acceptance letter attesting your enrolement for a language course. The acceptance letter states the dates and duration of your course. The applicant is required to fill in the application form available on the Centre's website and send it to the following email address: [CTPL@um.ac.ir](mailto:CTPL@um.ac.ir)

- To download the application form: <http://ctpl.um.ac.ir/index.php/en/2015-02-26-08-08-56/2015-03-05-19-16-37>

### Visa application

The acceptance letter enables you to apply for a student visa (you don't need an invitation letter as it is usually required for tourists). You should fill in the visa application and send it to the centre when you sent the application form.

- To download the Visa application: <http://ctpl.um.ac.ir/index.php/en/2015-02-26-08-08-56/2015-03-05-19-16-37>

Once you have received the acceptance letter from the Center:

- o You can apply for the student visa through the Center, they will apply for the student visa for you. Student visas are only delivered in Iranian embassies or consular offices outside of Iran. You should specify to the Center to which Iranian consular office you wish to collect your student visa. It can take one to five months to receive a student visa. Once your student visa is ready, the Center provides you with a numeric code and you will have to present this code to the Iranian embassy or consular office to receive your student visa;
- OR
- o You can apply for a student visa at an Iranian Embassy or consular office, presenting your acceptance letter in your application.

If the student visa does not arrive on time before you leave to Iran and you have already bought your ticket:

- o You can apply for a tourist visa upon arrival at the airport in Iran. This is not applicable to British/USA/Canadian/Indian citizens. The tourist visa upon arrival is valid for 30 days and is extendable. However, with this tourist visa, you will not be allowed to start your course.

If your student visa is awarded during the 30 days first days of your stay in Iran:

- o You will have to leave the country to go to an Iranian consular office abroad (as student visas are only delivered outside of Iran). You would have previously told the Center where you prefer to collect your visa (in Europe or in a country around Iran). Once your student visa is ready, the Center provides you with a numeric code and you will have to present this code to the Iranian embassy or consular office to receive your student visa.

If your student visa is not awarded during the 30 days first days of your stay in Iran:

- o You will have to leave the country and apply again for a tourist visa.

We advise to start the visa application procedure at least 5 months prior to the departure to prevent any delays. If the student only wants to stay 30 days, the Center requires the application to be done at least three business days prior to the arrival (Saturday to Wednesday) in order to leave time for the centre to arrange the accommodation and pick-up service from the airport.

Iranian authorities do not allow travellers who previously travelled to Israel and have a stamp in their passport attesting it to enter the Iranian territory.

## Pick-up service from the airport

You can reserve a pick-up service from the airport (costs 500,000 IRR which is € 15.00). It is a 24 hours service. The driver is sent from the Center and will provide you with a metro card, sim card, map, and give some change. He can drive you to your accommodation (dormitory or, most probably for the first night, the Bed & Breakfast).

- More information on the pick-up service: <http://ctpl.um.ac.ir/index.php/en/services-en/pick-up-service>

It is required to confirm with the Center previous to the departure to be

## Payment at the Center

You will have to make the payment for the Persian course and other services provided by the Center at the Center when you arrive. This may include the accommodation, food and pick-up service.

## Establishing your budget

It is essential to establish your budget prior to your departure in order to prepare the amount of money you will take to Iran. There is no possible access to your account outside Iran from within the country. The following budget can give you an idea of your expenses for one month. The conversion into Iranian Rial is based on the exchange rate as of August 2016 and may fluctuate in future months.

Description	Montly expenses (Euros)	Monthly expenses (IRR)
Dormitory		€31 IRR 1,052,000

Description	Montly expenses (Euros)	Monthly expenses (IRR)
Food (refectory)	€150	IRR 5,091,000
Extra food (lunch or dinner)	€60	IRR 2,036,000
Course books	€8	IRR 271,000
Phone	€10	IRR 339,000
Transport (bus, metro, taxi)	€20	IRR 679,000
Day trip - E.g to Torbate Jam by bus	€10	IRR 339,000
Shopping - E.g. one manteau or one turquoise silver ring	€25	IRR 848,000
<b>Total</b>		<b>IRR 10,318,000</b>



## 2. Your Arrival at Mashhad

### Mashhad city

Mashhad is the second most populous city in Iran and the capital of the Razavi Khorasan Province. This city was located on the ancient Silk Road. Today its main point of interest is the Imam Reza Shrine visited by over 20 million pilgrims every year.

### How to get to Mashhad by flight

We encourage students to fly directly to Mashhad, unless they wish to visit Tehran beforehand. This is because if you want to transit through Tehran to go to Mashhad, they will have an extra journey of at least 1 hour to get from Khomeini International Airport (IKA) which the main international airport of Iran, situated 30 kilometres southwest of the city of Tehran, and Mehrabad Airport, which is in charge of domestic flights. In case students wish to fly domestically, Mehran airline is one of the most recommendable Iranian airlines.

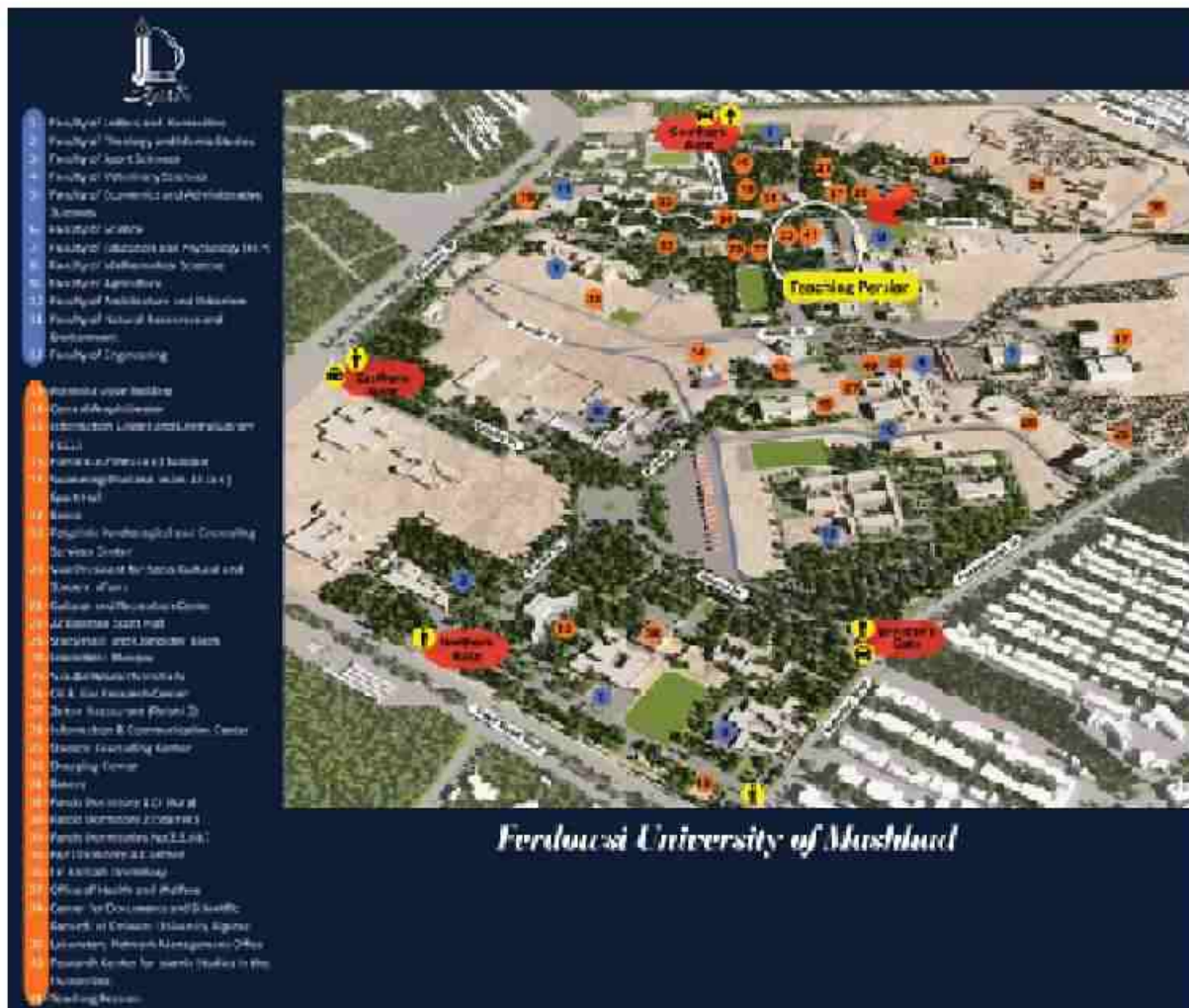
### How to get to Ferdowsi University and to the Center

The Center offers pick-up service from the airport (see point 1.3). FUM is on the metro line at the stop 'Park Mellat' and there are also city buses. The Center is located in front of the faculty of Humanities, next to the dormitory Pardis 1.



### Contact Information:

Iran, Mashhad, Azadi Square, Ferdowsi University of Mashhad  
International Center for Teaching Persian language to non-Persian Speakers  
Phone: +98513880  
Postal code: 9177948978



## Iranian currency and how to exchange money

The official currency of Iran is the Iranian Rial (IRR). The “toman” is an unofficial subdivision equivalent to ten rial. Thus 1,000 toman is 10,000 rial and 1 million toman is 10 million rial.

The passport is requested when you want to exchange money.

In general, when customers pay by card in Iran, the shopkeeper would ask for the pin code and you will have to tell him your code out loud.

We recommend you to go to an official exchange point, a ‘Sarraf’, which means exchange. The Sarraf usually takes no commission. You can exchange USD, EUR, and GBP almost everywhere in Iran. Foreign credit cards are not a reliable way for payments in Iran. There are many ATMs everywhere in Iran, but they only accept the domestic cards. Some hotels or shops may accept travel cheques, but it is not a reliable way of payment in Iran. It is therefore recommendable to bring money in cash in form of USD or EUR (the rate is better than for GBP).

## Open an Iranian bank account

You can open an Iranian bank account and receive a debit card. The Center can help you with the process.

## Student Card

Students are required to bring a picture to the Center to receive their student card. Female students are required to wear the hijab on the picture. It can take from a day to one week and a half to receive the student card. This card also enables you to charge money on it and buy food at the refectory.

## Mobile phone

The driver from the pick-up service can give you a sim card at your arrival or you can buy one at a mobile shop. Foreigners cannot register for a monthly plan but can have a rechargeable sim card and can top up at every shop or on the internet.



## **Internet connection**

You can get internet access on your mobile with some sim cards. The Virtual private network (VPN) has to be activated. A mobile shop can set the VPN on the mobile (approx. 20.000 IRR). You can buy a card on which there is a code. Once the code has been entered into the mobile, the VPN has to be switched on to access internet.

Telegram is a very popular application in Iran. It enables to message and to be part of chat groups. Similar to whatsapp, it enables individuals to share pictures, videos and links.

Iran boycotts corporate email accounts so the VPN enables to have access websites such as students' Mail or some universities' internet page.



### **3. Finding Your Way in Ferdowsi University Campus**

FUM has 23.000 students, 12 Faculties in a large campus of 120 acres. The Centre for Teaching Persian receives some 700 students from 30 countries. Around 70% of the foreign students come from Arabic countries. Some 300 of them are Iraqis and are taking a year of intensive Persian to enable them to pursue their undergraduate or postgraduate studies at the University.

The Center is composed of two buildings: one for Arabic speakers, one for non-Arabic speakers. The main building one contains the administrative offices, including the office of Dr. Ghabool on the second floor. On the ground floor, the office of international students is in charge of all student administrative tasks. There are also classrooms on the second floor. The second building hosts the Persian classes for non-Arabic speaker (mostly Korean, German, Italian students). It is located 2 minutes away from the main building, next to the Pardis 1.

#### **Transport within the campus**

The campus is similar to a city and there are buses and shuttles to travel within the campus. They are all gender segregated and there is an inscription on each bus stop indicating whether it is for women “khâharân” or for men “barâdarân”. Every building has a ‘guard room’ on the ground floor. It is common to order a taxi (“âgence”) there.



"Khâharân" inscription indicating that it is the bus stop for women

## **Persian courses**

There are four different levels of Persian classes and usually 6-12 students per class. There are different subject classes: main sessions, speaking "goft o goo", calligraphy "khat", or lectures on Iranian culture. Dr. Ghabool is the author of the four books determining the four different levels, or "jaleh". The main sessions are framed on the content of these books. An audio CD is also provided with the books.

The Center will assess your level on the first day of the course and allocate you to the class corresponding to your level. It is possible to change class if the level is too high or too low.

## **Other optional courses**

Students also have the opportunity to take other courses of Arabic or Persian literature. The Center can organize a new course when at least 6 students are willing to take part in it.



Books for the Persian courses

## Accommodation option 1: dormitory

Dormitories are named "Pardis". There are eight dormitories; they are all either only for female or only for male. There is a dormitory reserved for foreign students.

There is a curfew in the female dormitory at 10:00 pm. Female students have to be within the dormitory by 10:00 pm but if they notify the guard that they wish to go to another dormitory to visit friends, they have the permission to come back later.

Female Iranian students also have to leave a notification if they wish to leave the dormitory for a night or a few days.

The regulation may be different for foreign students, you should ask how this regulation applies to them. There is no curfew in the male dormitory and they can leave for a night or a few days without previous notification.

Foreign students are usually assigned to the dormitory for foreigners but it is better to share a room with an Iranian in order to improve your Persian and to have more intercultural exchanges. You can speak with the dormitory's personal if you wish to change your room. You may have to insist.

It is recommended to bring the blanket provided by the dormitory to the laundry to wash it before using it.

At every dormitory entry, there is a room where the dormitory's guard sits and keeps the records of the entries and exit. The guards are friendly and often invite students for a tea.

There is a courtyard of various sizes around each dormitory. There can be exercise facilities, telephone booth, a shop, table and chairs. There is a kitchen and bathrooms on each floor of the dormitory. Kitchens are equipped with dishwashing sink, dish holder and a stove. Students have to bring their own cutlery, pans, plates, dishwashing liquid and sponge.

Each room has got beds (minimum two beds per room), desk and chairs, rug, carpet, fridge, wardrobe, curtain, shoe holder, coat hanger, mirror, cooling/heating equipments (they are not always working) and fluorescent lamps. Students have to bring their own sheets for the bed.

### **Accommodation option 2: Bed & Breakfast**

The Bed & Breakfast facility is € 21.00 per night (700,000 IRR). It is recommended to book the Bed & Breakfast for the first night, as it may not be possible to enter the dormitory if your flight arrives to Mashhad late at night.

### **Finding Sustenance**

Refectories are situated on the campus next to each dormitory. The student card can be charged with money at the Center to buy the meals from the refectory. They are gender segregated.

There are cafes, small shops and some bakeries "noonvai" within the campus. There are small shops within the yard of every dormitory with basic amenities and food. Outside of the campus, there are larger supermarkets with more choice. There is a market for fruits and vegetables next to the Northern exit of the campus.

### **Safety**

The campus is a safe space. However, it is recommendable to avoid bringing valuable items to leave in the dormitory because there may not be available lockers in students' rooms. It is possible to leave valuables to the international center.

## **IT facilities and Internet connection on the Campus**

The IT centre in the campus is situated 5 minutes from the Center. Students can leave their computer for repair there.

- IT facilities at FUM: <https://en.um.ac.ir/content/IT-Facilities>

There are multiple computer rooms in the campus for students. You can use the computers by logging in with your student identification code. Computer rooms are gender segregated.

Students have to use the VPN from FUM to access internet on the campus.

- Instructions to connect to FUM VPN: [https://en.um.ac.ir/uploading/main/VPN\\_Help.pdf](https://en.um.ac.ir/uploading/main/VPN_Help.pdf)

The wifi network covers the whole campus. In case the wifi does not work, there are cables in dormitories. You may face issues with a Mackintosh to connect to FUM network.

## **Health Services**

There are health clinics near dormitories in the campus. The service is free of charge for students.

## **Dress code inside the university campus**

According to the Islamic Republic rules on women dress code, the hijab and Islamic clothes are obligatory. These rules are less strict for tourists and foreigners. If there is a problem you will usually be requested to correct your dress.

It is acceptable for women to allow wisps of hair to frame their face. The scarf is the most common covering for head and is called "Roosari" in Persian. The body should be covered with loose clothes like a coat or "manteau". It is recommendable not to wear open-toed sandals on the campus, or only with socks underneath.



In the university campus, female students are required to respect the Islamic dress code, as everywhere in the country. You do not need to wear only black colours but it is preferable not to wear flashy colours. Iranian students usually wear the “marnae” (see picture below).



Student wearing the  
“marnae”

Different rules apply to foreigners. You should ask at the beginning how these rules apply to you. There are shops selling manteau near the university on Park-e Mellat avenue. Another famous place for shopping is Sajjad. It is recommended to buy a large manteau before flying to Iran in order to feel comfortable during the first days of the trip rather than planning to buy a manteau at the arrival which can lead to unnecessarily stressful situation.

For men, it is preferable to wear long leaves. Shorts are not acceptable in public places like the university. T-shirts are acceptable.

## University campus rules

At the main university entry, guards can ask you to present your student ID. There are different guards in the campus: at the main entrance, at the doors of the dormitory, within the ‘lobby’ of the dormitory, and at the Center. It is common to be asked questions about one’s origins; you should not feel unease because of these questions, that can seem intrusive. The doors of the campus close at 12:00 pm, there is usually one door remaining open.

## Cultural facts

The “taarof” is an Iranian system of civility and politeness. One example of taarof could be described as offering false invitations to primarily strangers and expecting them not to take the offer. Both parties are expected to understand that it is not a real invitation but taarof. It is common that a

If you are in doubt, always ask. Iranians and people working within the campus are usually very kind and willing to help foreign students.

shopkeeper may initially refuse to quote a price for an item, suggesting that it is worthless in comparison with the value of the customer, saying "ghaabel nadaareh". Taarof obliges the customer to insist on paying, before the shopkeeper finally quotes the price. Another example of taarof can be described in hospitality: you can be invited but this invitation can be a taarof. It is possible to ask someone not to taarof by saying "taarof nakonid" but amusingly the request itself might still be a type of taarof.



Dinner in a dormitory's room

You may avoid shaking hands or kiss unrelated individuals from the opposite gender. It is possible that conservative individuals avoid eye contact with the opposite gender as well. This should not be taken as an offence. However, it is well accepted in society for both female or both male friends to kiss each other on both cheeks, to hold hands or hug each other whether they are related or not.

Always be prepared to remove shoes before entering in someone's room or home. Iranian use the carpet to pray on, sleep on, and having their meals on, for this reason it should remain free of street dirt.

## **Sport facilities and music within the campus**

There are sport facilities on the campus: swimming pool, running club and fitness facilities. You can rent a bike. You can ask to get access to the piano and former students could take "daf" classes.

## Traveling around Mashhad

There are multiple interesting sights around Mashhad. Torghabeh and Shandiz are situated on northwest of the city, in semi-mountainous areas. It takes 45 minutes by car from FUM. They are enjoyable hiking places with restaurant and teahouses on the way. Toos is located in the northeast of Mashhad and hosts the Tomb of one of the most famous Persian poets, Ferdowsi. Further west, the city of Nishapur is about 2 hours from FUM and hosts Omar Khayyam Mausoleum. Torbat-e Jam is another very interesting city to visit. It is situated 2 hours southeast from Mashhad near to the Afghan boarder. It is a Sunni majority city with an impressive mosque. Finally, Mashhad is only about 160 miles (250 km) from Ashgabat, Turkmenistan.

