

KAMAL (3721 Meter)

June 6, 2003

The road that leads to the **Sahand-Tabriz** ski area¹ and to the foot of the **Kamal** is on the left side of the Tehran-Tabriz highway, right next to the sign indicating “Tabriz 15 km.”. Strangely enough the sign is a good 30 km. before Tabriz!

The recently paved, winding road takes you through very lush valleys towards the ski area and the Kamal foot. It is about 22 km. long.

Kamal is one of the many peaks of the Sahand mountain chain (see my report on Sahand July 25-26, 2002).

Since it is about 600 km. from Tehran, we (Massi N²., Nini, Marco D., Tommy and I) started the day before at 5 am so as to have enough time to be “on location” still in daylight.

Driving very relaxed and stopping at Sultaniyeh³ on the way, we arrived at the ski area at abt 3 p.m. Thus we had ample time to locate the Kamal slopes with the best snow and easiest access for the tour the next day.

Here we would decide which route we would have to take the next morning.

For those interested in archeology there is also a Saljuq period bridge undergoing restoration a few kilometers before Mianeh, right on the side of the road next to a very pleasant “chai-khaneh”. There is a photo of that bridge on my Sahand report.



Massi in Front of Sultaniyeh

It was already quite cold and windy when we arrived at Kamal’s foot. Indeed, the next morning there was a good 10 to 15 cm of packed spring snow!

I could rave about the area but The skiing possibilities are our tour so late in the season.

We stopped here at the foot of scenery – and have a sandwich! Then we drove back to the main hotel in Tabriz, where I had / night.

As you can see in the photo the and impressive - it reminded me The El Goli hotel has all the revolving rooftop restaurant!

The rooms are very nice but the always the case in these large so called “international 5 star hotels” in Iran, have room for improvement!

For our purpose it was great: Very nice clean suite with a large entrance, 2 bedrooms with a separate bathroom each, living room, kitchenette / bar and even satellite T.V.

What more could we want?

Poor Tommy had to stay in the Patrol, which is no problem because it was not hot and sleeping in the back of the car is sort of like a camping vacation for him. He enjoys it very much.



Massi, Nini & Tommy in front of El Goli

it would still not do it justice. almost endless as proven by

Kamal for a while to enjoy the highway and on to the El Goli booked a suite for abt. 100 USD

hotel building is very modern of the UN headquarters in NY! modern facilities – even a

food and service, as is almost

¹ Abt. 2950 meter

² Nini’s sister who is visiting us from Hamburg

³ Abt. 30 km before Zanjan on the Tehran-Tabriz road and described by Alexander Pope as “One of Persia’s supreme architectural achievements”

It is too much to ask for to take your dog in a hotel room in Iran. It was so also before the revolution.

For dinner we went to a very good “no frills” but still renowned “chelo-kababi⁴” by the name of “Eftekhari”. It was much better and much less expensive than the fancy buffet dinner the next evening at the hotel.

The next morning Marco and I drove as far as we could with the Patrol – actually a little too far until it got stuck in the snow-mud! We were at 3040 meters or abt 90 meters higher than the base of the ski lift - about at the same altitude at which we had stopped the day before. It is only about a 45 minutes drive from Tabriz.

The route up, which we had determined the day before, was obvious: To the “cabane” (3244 meter) and then practically straight up the mountain.



At the top with Tommy

We started walking towards the peak of the Kamal at 7:30. At the shelter, some young Tabrizis that had camped there offered us some tea. We rested 15 minutes and were off to the top. We reached it at 10 am. Our pace was fairly brisk, judging by the difference in altitude covered and more simply because we were going faster than most of the other hikers which did not have skis to carry.

The descent was in almost ideal conditions: beautiful sunny weather, hard packed snow covered by just 10 to 15 cm of fresh powder – “icing on the cake”!

We skied all the way to 50 meters from the car on very good quality snow. We only had to take off our skis once, close to the beginning of the run to cross abt. 30 meters of rocky terrain.

At about lunchtime we were back at the hotel. Rest, sauna, dinner and “dodo”.

The next day I went to visit my customers in Tabriz, Nini and Massi went sightseeing and to the bazaar, Marco was on some kind of a secret mission!

By 3 pm we were on our way back to Tehran. Fortunately, with the help of a young driver whom I hired on the spot to help us with the strenuous drive back to Tehran!

Sincerely,

J-M Houtcief



The Kamal Slope

⁴ The typical Iranian restaurant. It serves mainly a dish of meat and rice known as “chelo-kabab”.