

Dizin to Darbandsar

April 26, 2005

There are three “ski resorts” in this area close to Tehran¹: Dizin, Shemshak and Darbandsar.

There are three other ski slopes near Tehran: Abe-Ali², Khor and Tochal³. Therefore, there are six different places to ski near Tehran but the first three mentioned above which are close to each other are the best and most popular.

- **Dizin** is the largest ski resort in Iran with 3 gondolas, chairlifts, skilifts, and a few restaurants and hotels.

The only half way decent hotel in the area is “Hotel Gajereh” a few kilometers before reaching Dizin from the Karaj road⁴. The hotel was built and is run by the Ministry of Mines and Metals, which is a typical Iranian idiosyncrasy. Why on earth a ministry would be in the hotel business, god only knows but so it is. Actually, there is a logic to it: the original idea was to have a decent place to hold government seminars!

The two original Dizin hotels at the base of the slopes are a total disaster. Restaurants are best avoided although I am told there are a couple of okay hamburger / pizza joints on the Shemshak to Dizin road.

Personally, I avoid restaurants in Iran altogether because there is no wine, women are veiled and I try to keep my weight down. So, what’s the point?

- Among these three ski resorts, **Shemshak** is the oldest, closest to Tehran and with the most challenging slopes. They are not very long but are varied and steep and, I think, absolutely fabulous.

It has two chairlifts, a couple of skilifts, a baby slope and two beautiful small hotels that are unfortunately completely run down now and as dirty as those in Dizin.

I find Shemshak to be one of the most pleasant places, anywhere I have been, to ski for a day. I sometimes go skiing there very early in the morning and am back in Tehran in the office by 1 pm – incredible in a city of 12 million or so - but true!

- **Darbandsar** is the family resort par excellence. It has two chairlifts (one just installed) and at least one skilift. It’s a pleasant place to go to also because of its location, close to the large village of Darbandsar, which has kept its traditional personality.

¹ About 40 kilometers North of Tehran as the crow flies.

² Totally run down. It has become mainly a picnic area. Still it is pleasant to go there occasionally to reminisce the past.

³ Please look up my separate reports on Khor and Tochal.

⁴ There are two roads to Dizin: one, via Karaj to the lower hotel parking, the other via Shemshak to the upper parking.

These three ski areas are very close to each other. As a matter of fact one can ski, as we did today, off-piste, from Dizin to Darbandsar. Shemshak is practically across the street from Darbandsar on the way to Dizin.

Getting ready to "attack"



Apart from the Darbandsar chairlift, no new installations have been setup in these three main Iranian ski resorts for 25 years! And the maintenance is, in a way, very efficient: the bare minimum, just enough to keep things from grinding to a halt. Maintenance, in any case, is unfortunately not one of us Iranians' main qualities.

To be fair, I have to mention that:

- Some work, has been done in Tochal by reopening the last stretch of the gondola which makes it possible to reach the two chairlifts at the top of the mountain and the opening or maybe reopening, I don't know which, of a pleasant high altitude (abt. 3600 meter) restaurant / hotel at the base of the above mentioned chairlifts..
- Quite a few installations have been set up in the provinces and there are now, at least some, granted very basic, ski slopes with at least a skilift in about a dozen localities in Iran.

We first climbed (that's a big word – its actually only a fifteen minute walk) with skis on the back to the Sical⁵ Peak (about 3700 meter) and skied down to the upper part of Darbandsar (2700 meter).

FirouzF negotiating the first stretch



The weather was a little hazy and the snow, especially at the top, somewhat soft and braking but in the last stretch which was steeper and slightly less exposed the snow was packed enough to make the skiing safe, easy and very enjoyable.

It was a little late in the season; on top of that the weather had suddenly warmed up. Still we managed to ski down all the way to the upper part of the Darbandsar village and only had to walk ten minutes or so carrying the skis to reach the teahouse at the bottom of the old Darbandsar chairlift where we had, what else, tea!

⁵ The peak of Dizin. The gondola stops below it.

After a short rest, we took a cab back up to our car that we had left in the upper Dizin parking.

Ali-MohammadN, Amir-Hosseina, FirouzF and RezaJ⁶ joined me on this short tour.

J-M Houtcieff

Links:⁷

www.micky@amanieh.com⁸

<http://www.skifed.ir/slopes1.asp>

http://www.bettercamper.com/show/mountain_link.pl/mountain_id/3414

<http://www.magic-carpet-travel.com/itineraries/shemshak.html>

<http://www.travel-of-snowboarding.com/middle-east/iran/tehran/ski resort-darbandsarskiarea.asp>

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Amir-Hosseina, FirouzF, RezaJ and I at the top of Sical



⁶ Seyed Reza Jaffari ski instructor specialized in the Dizin area and light off-piste skiing.
His contact number is 0262-2542567

⁷ There are some inaccuracies in some links but they are not important.

⁸ My Khor and Tochal reports, among others, are here.