



## TOCHAL SKI SLOPE (abt. 3500 –3800 meter)

November 22, 2002

The Tochal “ski slope” close to the peak of the same name on the Elbourz range north of Tehran, actually consists of two areas:

- The top area with two parallel chairlifts and one skilift, which are located in a northwest facing bowl at the 7<sup>th</sup> and last station of the gondola (abt. 3700 meter) almost at the top of Tochal.
- The middle station area with a chairlift and a couple of skilifts, which are located at the 5<sup>th</sup> station (abt. 3000 meter).

These two areas are not connected but it is possible to ski down to the lower area “off-piste” when there is a lot of snow.

The Tochal area with its lower slopes is the favorite excursion area for Tehrani hikers on weekends all year round. During the skiing season, mainly young, skiers and snow-borders come there too. With the mix of tourists (some with chadors and some very hip!), hikers, mountaineers and skiers / snow-borders that come here the place is lively and quite atypical.

The Tochal gondola<sup>1</sup> and the two skiing areas were completed just before the revolution. Unfortunately the last station burnt a few months after the revolution. Almost no one in Iran believing in accidents and people always looking for some secret CIA type plot style scenario, most people say it was set on fire. Thus the top area could not be utilized for almost twenty years.

A couple of years ago it was finally repaired. Additionally an apparently very nice (I haven't gone in yet) hotel was built at the base of the two chairlifts.

Since there is absolutely nowhere to go from this hotel it would be ideally suited for lovers (unfortunately the country's regime nor the people themselves - notwithstanding what the westernized Iranians may say – are not yet liberated enough for that to happen any time soon!) or for a retreat from it all with books to read, etc...



Marco and I at the top of Tochal with the Damavand in the back

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<sup>1</sup> abt 7.5 kilometers long, it was apparently the longest gondola when it was built about 30 years ago. The vertical elevation is over 2000 meters!

The slope itself, like most high altitude slopes, is not very steep or long. The vertical drop covered by the two parallel chairlifts is only about 300 meters.

The Tochal ski area's main attraction is that it is "practically" in downtown Tehran.

- At the top ski area you can ski for at least six months of the year in beautiful surroundings. The quality of the snow and the weather are excellent most of the time.
- The area at the 5<sup>th</sup> station is not that interesting because it is south-facing; as a result the snow quality is rarely very good; it melts and becomes soft quite fast. It is worth going to only after a heavy snowfall, before the snow has had the time to soften up.

From Tehran one goes to the "Velenjak" residential area North of Tehran, where the gondola's starting station is. It is so close that you could get there even with the Tehran municipal transport system (bus or public taxi)!

From there the gondola ride takes less than forty minutes to the last station where the ski area is.

Marco and I wanted to do a little more exercise than just ski so we went with sealskins to the very top of Tochal (3950 meter), which is as about another forty minutes walk.

We skied down, took another run in the still too thin powder and were back to Tehran on time for me to pick-up my wife Nini and to make it on time to our lunch invitation at 1:30!

The day pass, including the gondola, costs 50,000 I. Rials = 6.25 \$ US.

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