

**Radu Dinescu,**  
Secretary General  
UNTRR

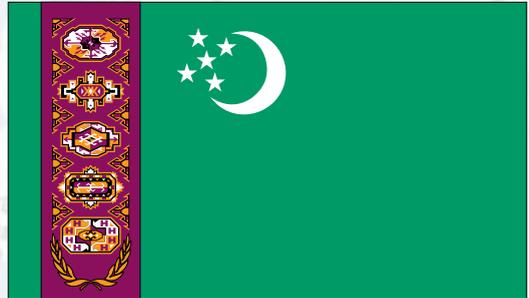
## **We have been there as simple traveler on route to a conference in Ashgabat!**



**IRAN (Islamic Republic)**  
Surface 1,648,195 km<sup>2</sup>



**Population (2011) 74,700,000**  
**Language: PERSAN (or FARSI)**  
**GDP 482,45 Billions \$**  
**GDP/per capita 6,359 \$**  
**GDP PPP\* 990,22 billion \$**  
**GDP/per capita PPP\* 13,053 \$**  
**Currency: Rial**  
**Exchange rate 1\$=12,500 Riali (in bank)**  
**1\$=15-16,000 riali (unofficial), variable rate –**  
**high inflation 30% annually**  
**Euro – less accepted than USD**  
**1€=15,000 Riali (bank)**  
**Local hour – GMT+3h30**  
**Internet extension .ir**



**TURKMENISTAN**  
Surface 491,210 km<sup>2</sup>



**Population (2009) 5,110,000**  
**Language: Turkmen (official, similar with Turkish), but Russian is used for communication**  
**GDP 25,74 billion \$**  
**GDP/per capita 4,658 \$**  
**GDP PPP 43,36 billion \$**  
**GDP/per capita PPP 7,846 \$**  
**Currency: Manat**  
**Exchange rate 1\$=2,84 Manati fixed rate for long period**  
**Euro – less accepted than USD**  
**1€=3,54 Manati**  
**Local time – GMT+5h00 (no change of**

### International phone code 98

There are mobile phone networks but only for voice and sms, no data transfer is possible. Voice and sms with low access for the Romanian mobiles.

Mobiles from RO – do not work on voice and sms beyond 200 km East of Teheran, even if the network exists. Internet Access through fixed network – in hotels, etc, but the internet has certain limitations.

The 25th world economy based on the nominal GDP and the 18th after the GDP PPP.

Diesel – local transporters benefit of a monthly quantity at the price of 1500 Rial/liter (individuals do not have diesel cars they only have on gasoline 7000 Rial/liter), free price 3500 Rial/liter. For RO a tax of 0,70 \$/liter is paid at the border, depending on the travelled distance in IRAN and you get a card to fuel the vehicle. Gas stations are not at European standards but they provide the services you need.

\*PPP- Paritatea Puterii de Cumpărare

hour for winter/summer) on summer time GMT+4h00

Internet extension .tm

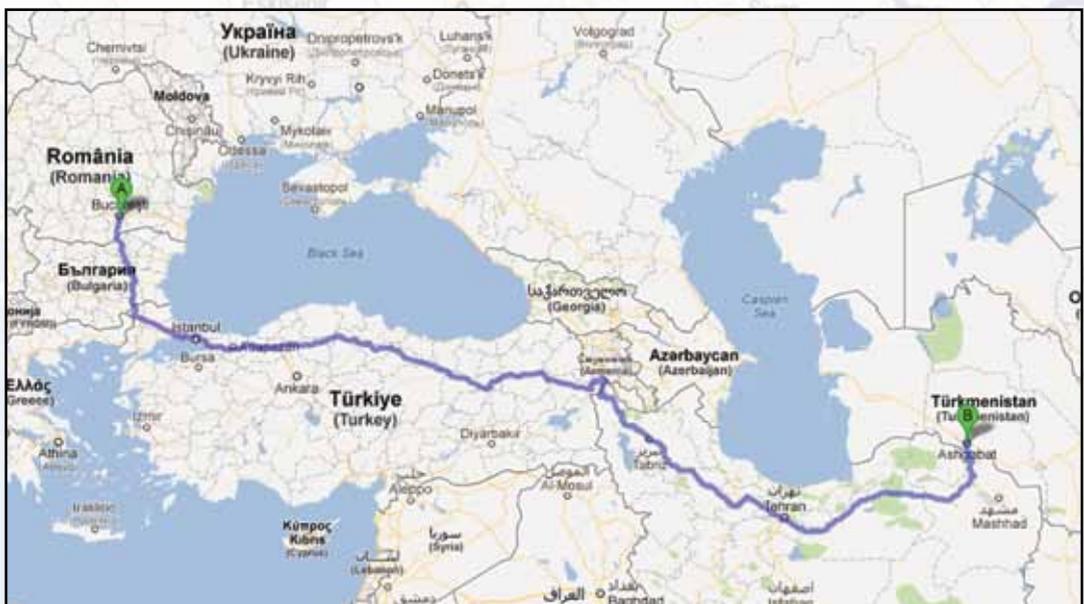
International phone code 993

Romanian mobile phones do not work. There is a mobile network but is it not linked to other suppliers.

Internet can be accessed by fixed networks – there are internet access points in the commercial centers, in hotels, etc.

The fuel is allocated in free quotas to inhabitants and it is subsidies for extra quantities aside the quota. Foreigners pay an extra fee as per the quantity used – to reach the destination declared at entrance. Impossible to change due to internal controls in the 5 regions, as to the need to have a local insurance– TKM is not yet a part of the Green Card Convention.

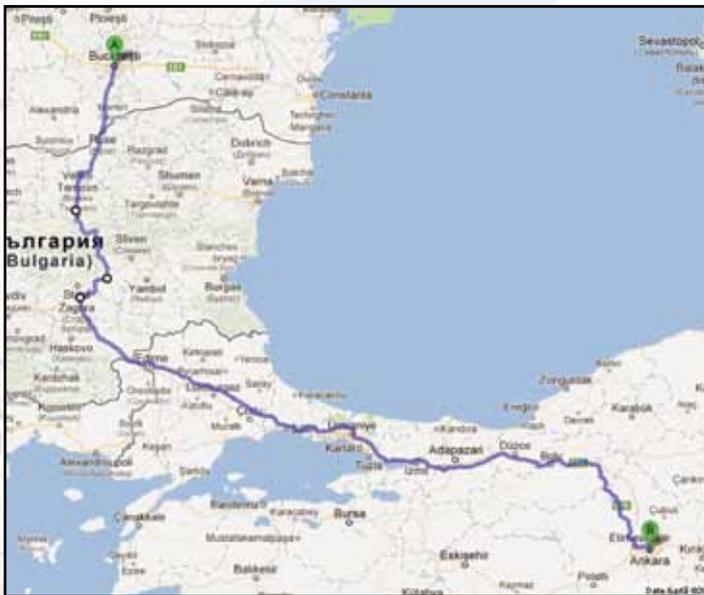
Fuel stations are more spreaded than in Iran, but not all of them sell diesel; only the ones placed on truck routes, usually on city limits, sells diesel. We did not experienced cues on fueling.



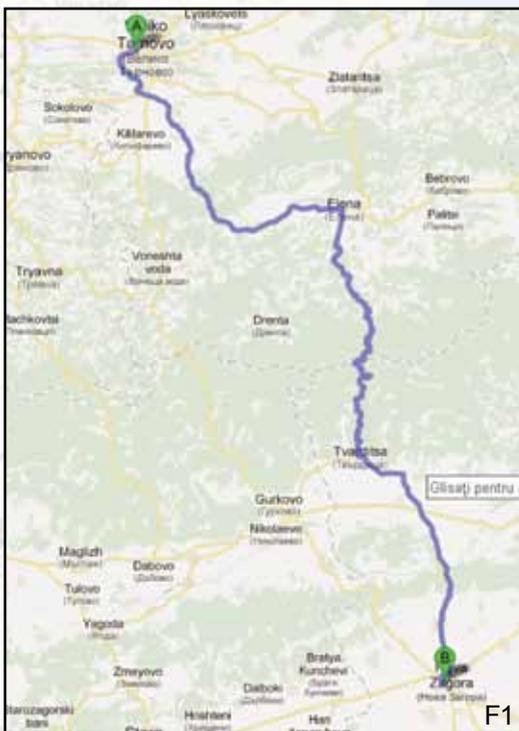
## We have been there as simple traveler on route to a conference in Ashgabat!

We did not requested any special treatment on borders and we did not took advantage of any preferential treatment, going through all of them as simply travelers. We have been Radu Dinescu and Cornel Iordache with a normal diesel Audi, without any special preparation.

### Day 1. Bucharest – Ankara – 1120 km (1070 km without diversion routes)



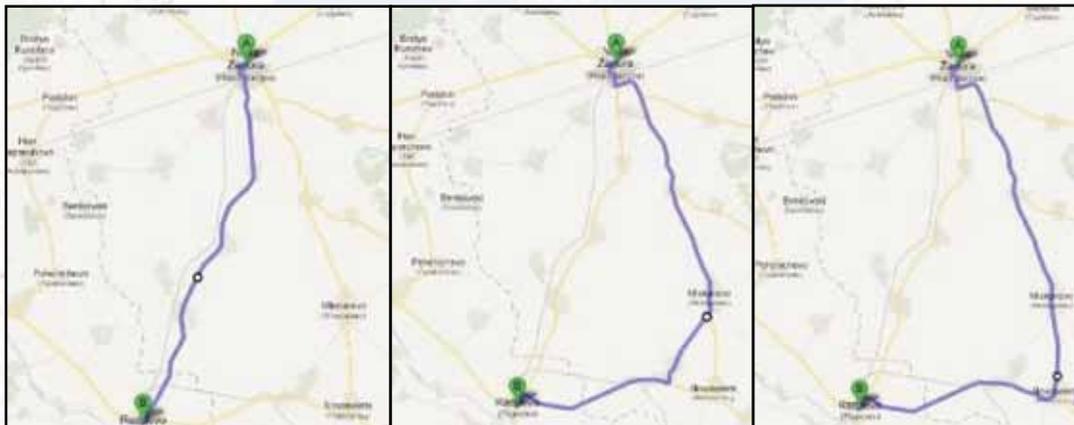
- In Bulgaria you may try 4-5 alternative routes to Svilengrad – adjacent to Kapitan Andreevo – to reach the entry point Kapikule in Turkey, but by far the best route – rehabilitated road, low altitude in mountain crossing - is the one being pentru intrarea in Turcia la Kapikule, in sa de departe ruta cea mai buna – drum reabilitat, inaltime mica la traversarea munților este cea prin Ruse – Byala – Polski Trambesh - Veliko Tarnovo – Gurkovo - Nova Zagora (vezi F1) – Radnevo – Galabovo-Simeonovgrad – Harmanli – Svilengrad.



Pay attention to Veliko Tarnovo exit, the road to Nova Zagora via Gurkovo starts from right side, passing under a bridge the go forward road. (F2). If you missed this one, you still have a chance to go left after 2 km, and going on a secondary road to reach also the optimum route (F3). If instead of left you continue to drive forward you will take Gabrovo, Shipka, Stara Zagora route – longer with 44 km, and with a higher altitude, a narrower road and with higher traffic being complicated to pass over even the slow vehicles.



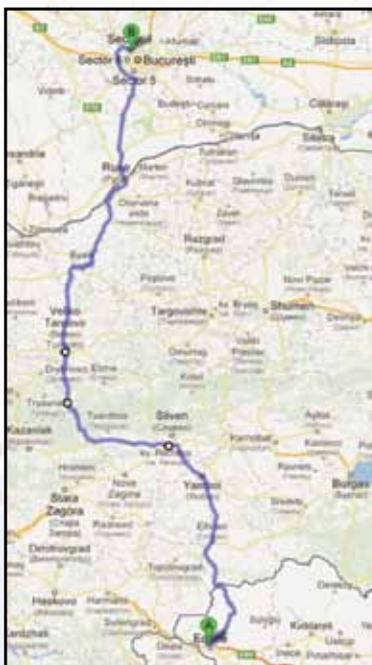
For a while, the road deviates twice from the direct route, once over the segment Nova Zagora – Radnevo (25 km directly), to the East 35 km through Mlekarevo and Pet mogili or 39 km if the shorter lower category road from Pet mogili is avoided, taking the road through Novoselets.



A second deviation is required in the Galabovo-Simeonovgrad area – directly, the distance is 15 km, but for vehicles under 3.5t the by-pass through Opan may be used – 43 km in total.

**For the vehicles over 3.5 tons, until the complete rehabilitation of the Galabovo-Simeonovgrad road, the recommended route is from Nova Zagora through Stara Zagora, Opan, Simeonovgrad.**

**Another route is through Yambol - Elhovo - Hamzabeyli.**



Turkey has a 3 lane highway from the entrance to Kapikule, until Ankara, except for a single segment before Istanbul, of approx. 60 km, which has only two lanes on the same driveway. Between Edirne and Istanbul there are only 3 pairs of gas stations on the highway, on both driveways – BP, Shell and Petrol Ofisi (purchased by OMV for approx. 2 years).

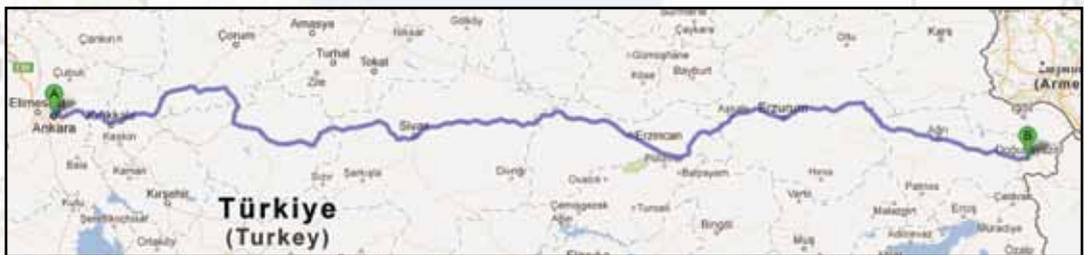
The segment from the exit at the highway toll point at Istanbul and the toll point situated at the bridge entrance is covered in average within approx. 60 minutes, but, at rush hours, the waiting time may double and even triple.

When exiting Istanbul, in order to follow the direction to Ankara, one must follow the signs, for the highway the exit being to the right and then underneath the road ahead, to the left. There is the false impression that the road to Ankara is the straight one, with all the others existing from it. The traffic is very intense for approx. 100 km after the bridge over Bosforus and moderate for another 100 km after Izmit, then the road is fairly free.

The highway to Ankara reaches a significant altitude at Bolu, reaching 1815 m close to Ankara (the city is situated in the Anatolian Plateau, the average altitude being approx. 1000 m). There are gas stations, with facilities for trucks and buses. Gas stations with large, modern, newly built shopping centers are recommended for the buses.

### **Day 2. Ankara-Dogubeyazit 1180 km,**

### **Route: Ankara –Kirikkale-Sivas-Erzincan-Erzurum-Agri-Dogubeyazit**



Two-lane on the driveway express road, with city belts around the large cities – no passing through the city. The speed limit is 90 km/h also for private cars, with a tolerance up to 105 km/h. The fine for 130km/h was 154 Turkish Lira, but you can pay only ¾ of its value if you pay within 15 days – in our case, 110 Turkish Lira. Romanians can pay at Counter No. 53 at the exit through Kapikule to Bulgaria. Today, approx. 10% of this road undergoes maintenance or modernization works. The most part of this road is new – of higher quality than new highways in the EU, but it also has two segments reaching an altitude of more than 2200 m, which seems spectacular, but in reality it is only relatively spectacular, taking into consideration that the average altitude on this route is 1200-1400 m, starting from approx. 1000 m in Ankara. Even when the road is not brand new, it maintains



the same width, without any holes in it. Dogubeyazit is situated 34 km away from the Gurburlak broder crossing point, between Turkey and Iran, Bazargan.

Over the road segment between Erzurum to the border, several days may pass without any control, but there may also be days when the Turkish gendarmes make plenty of controls, including upon the buses regularly transporting passengers in the area. Such controls are mainly aimed at drug smuggling.

Although it has a rather grey appearance and may look a bit frightening at first sight, Dogubeyazit is entirely safe for people or vehicles – left in front of the hotel, in the street, despite the hustle and bustle and intense traffic, both on the road and on the sidewalks, it was never touched or wiped by anyone. Due to the sand and dust blown by the wind in this area, at the small rainfall the cars are covered by a sticky dust.

All gas stations in Turkey accept cards, at least Visa and Mastercard, therefore there is no need to exchange any amount to Turkish Lira. The last Shell gas station was noticed on the Erzurum belt.



**Higher quality roads than in many EU Western countries!!!**



Dacia is more popular in the East of Turkey than in the West, where Fiat has a much longer history, followed by Renault made in Turkey – Clio, Megane sedan. Fiat Doblo, VW Caddy, Renault Kangoo, Ford Connect are highly popular – these cars can carry both people, and a sufficient amount of good for the needs of a family business. Dacia range will include a similar car named Dokker.



Due to the huge price of Diesel fuel in Turkey 1.7-1.8 Euro/liter, and to the fact that only new vehicles can be registered (first registration), despite the pretty high taxes (approx. 20% higher than in Romania), the long distance truck fleet is rather new. Only locally or regionally operated trucks may be older, however there is an upgrading trend in this area, too – new Mercedes or Scania trucks – traditional truck bodies, with Oriental influences – seen from the rear look like old cars, but when seen from the front you realize that they are brand new trucks – often with double front steering axle and a double rear driving axle. 8x4





Although the temperature outside is around 20 Celsius degrees in the city, and even higher at noon, there are significant snow layers in the mountains.



The buses offering regular passenger transport on internal routes, nomatter the operated routes – in Western Turkey or the far East, they have the same high standards – Mercedes Travego buses with toilets, bar, internet wi-fi, screens mounted in the back of each chair, tea and coffee offered with a biscuit, all included in the travel price – for 200 km – 11 Euro – such standard does not exist on the internal routes in Romania, maybe not even on external routes!



Dacia Logan has the same name in Turkey – here we are on the city belt of Erzincan city (situated 1050 km East of Istanbul through Amasya, or 1160 km through Ankara), 500 km away from the Iran border – Gurburlak/Bazargan.



Erzincan bus station!!!

Control station for commercial vehicles! Equipped with platform scales for total weighing – the so-called static weighing – the entire vehicle being lifted on the platform. Such control stations can be seen all over Turkey, most of them unfinished and unequipped with the platform scales. The never-ending discussion generated by the Romanian authorities – static weighing versus dynamic weighing (passing with the truck over a scale measuring the weight on one axle, and summing them up afterwards)! As if a man’s weight should not be the same when measured with electrical or mechanical scales! Or, in the case of thermometers, as if we should care if the temperature is indicated by mercury, alcohol, electric or mechanical circuits! At 22 degrees, all of them should indicate 22 degrees and nothing else! Within maximum one year, commercial vehicles’ control in Turkey will pass to a higher level.



Actual size police car dummies, seen from one side, located perpendicularly on the road, the flashlights being supplied from photovoltaic cells connected to a small battery.



1000 km East from Ankara, there are covered footbridges in the localities.



In Turkey, the farmers or the peasants, whatever you may call them, care about efficiency – therefore you will not see anyone working the land with a grubbing hoe! They all use mechanical equipment, whether tractors or small motorized moving devices for various uses – including digging! In Romania, one week later, I saw people working the land with the grubbing hoe, like 2000 years ago!!!



In Turkish, rakim means altitude. At the entrance of many localities, you can see the Population (number of inhabitants) - Nufus, and the Altitude – Rakim.

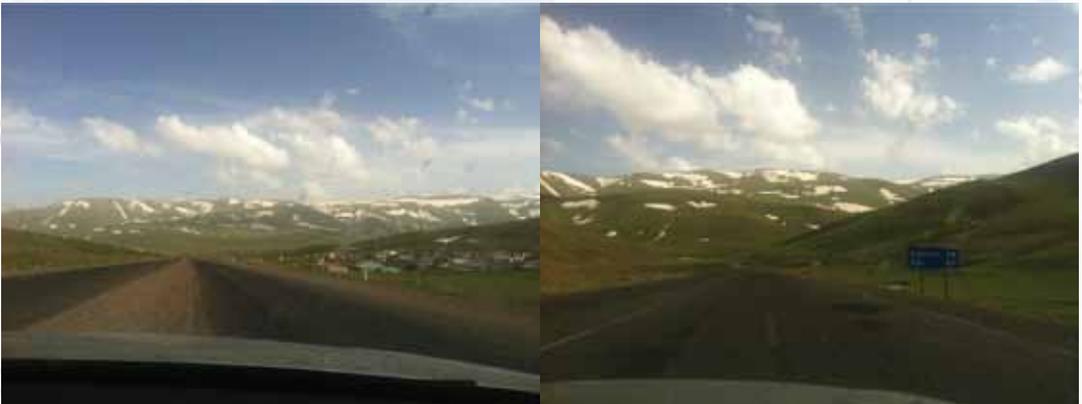




Gendarmerie Mountain! This is what one would understand from the Jandarma inscription written in sufficiently big letters on this mountain. Anyway, Jandarma is much more active in Eastern Turkey, taking decisive actions against drug smuggling and any other illegal activities. On the way back, we met one Jandarma filter every approx. 30-50 km close to the border, over a distance of 300-400km. 2210 m altitude! A bit more than the 2140 m on Transalpina, but here trucks and buses can easily drive, while only cars and motorbikes are welcome on Transalpina, now while works are still being carried out on it, and a vehicle of 2,5 m width could not pass on the free half of the road where the bridge diggings are carried out; but even when it will be ready, buses will not be able to climb too easily the extremely tight curves, where the level difference is much too high! Thus, 2210 m in Turkey seems to be a spectacular altitude, but the two-lane road goes up much more smoothly and the curves are sufficiently



wide, offering no special feeling. On Dealul Negru, the curves are extremely tight and the ramps are sufficiently high, compared to Turkey – do not forget that these altitudes are reached from the high area of the plateau at approx. 1400-1600 m, and not from the sea level!



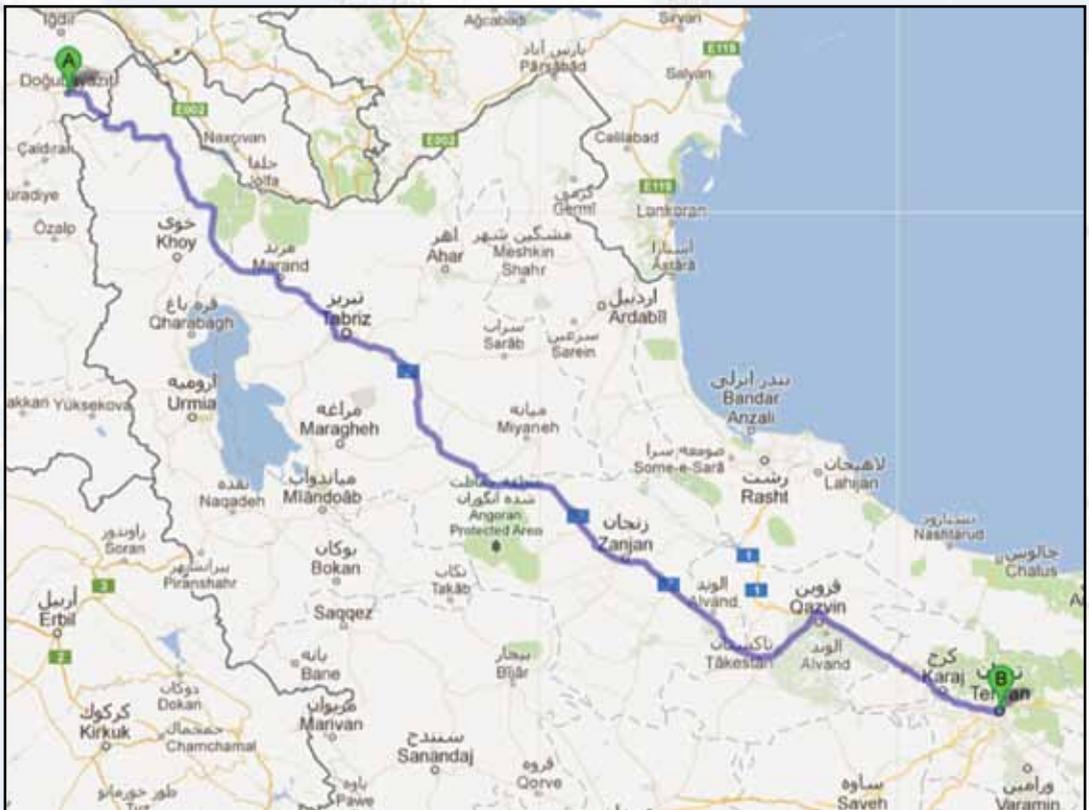


Pedestrian area – there is one in the small town situated at 1150 km East of Ankara! There is no point trying to make local comparisons!

Dogubeyazit in the area close to downtown.

**Day 3. Dogubeyazit – Teheran 940 km, crossing the border Gurburlak/ Bazargan**

**Route: Dogubeyazit-Gurburlak-Bazargan-Maku (belt) - Marand (belt) – Tabriz (belt) – Teheran.**



In Turkey the road has two lanes on each way. And the time is one hour and a half later than the Iranian time. Thus, we left at 05:30 Turkish time, i.e. 07:00 Iranian time. We were the first car arrived at the border, within approx. 30 minutes, and we passed to the area between the borders, where we could see plenty of Turkish people walking with huge packs of bound textiles and other carrying empty gas bottles, for small traffic border trade. At 07:30 Iranian time, 06:00 Turkish time, the access gate to Iran was opened. The border militaries politely directed us to stamp our passports. We entered the border police and, within 5 minutes, after the regular passport control using modern scanning systems, we passed to the customs, where a polite customs officer asked us a few questions in English and told us that, if our vehicle documents were also in order, a colleague of his was going to check them, within 5 minutes we were going to leave. The car traffic on the way to Iran is relatively low, foreigners travelling by caravans, imported cars from the EU and brought on wheels, and several commercial Turkish vehicles under 3.5t. For vehicles under 3.5 t it is recommended to use CPD for temporary import of vehicles on the Iranian territory. In Romania, it may be procured from ACR, a guarantee of EUR 16,000 being required, while a register costs EUR 500. For the vehicles not owned by the natural person travelling by them, but by a legal person, it is recommended to have a power of attorney in the Farsi (Persian) made up and translated by a certified translator, bearing the stamp of the Embassy of Iran. Simple copies thereof may be useful.

For the trucks travelling and using TIR carnets, no CPD is required. The trucks are waiting in a queue of several kilometers, along the express road, either on one lane, or on two lanes. The examination is quickly performed both when exiting Turkey, and when entering Iran. The long waiting time is due to the procedures and documents required to be processed by the Iranian authorities. The Turkish have the big advantage of having a set of common words both with the Iranians and, even more, they can understand both the Azeri and the

Turkmen people. For the Romanians, it is rather difficult to understand them. The good part is that, at any Iranian border crossing point, the officers are polite and at least one of them per shift, usually a deputy of the customs head, speaks English. However, pay attention to customs commissioners, who are trying to get as much as possible from you, especially when it is your first trip and you don't know the fees and procedures. Here we can recommend an agent recommended by the chamber of commerce, industry and minerals in Teheran. In our case, since we did not have a CPD, we weren't able to cross too easily, and some private customs commissioners/agents were called for. One of them prepared the papers for the French people who were travelling with a house type on wheels, while others prepared our papers – they were kind, they offered us tea and coffee, they ensured us that they were taking into consideration the time of transit to Turkmenistan, but also the return, they cautiously prepared the documents for more days – instead of maximum 5 they wrote 7 days, they asked us whether we wanted to use several border crossing points to exit to/enter from Turkmenistan, but we limited ourselves to one border crossing point, Bajgiran, situated 35 km away from Ashgabat. It was a good decision because the roads in Iran are very good, while in Turkmenistan, out of the 500 km from the Caspian Sea (Turkmenbasi) at Ashgabat, only approx. 150 km are rehabilitated, the works on the rest of them being in progress.

The unpleasant thing was that those commissioners who processed our documents kept us a lot at the customs – we spent 4 hours for operations which can be performed within 20-40 minutes, and, in addition to this, we paid \$600 and hardly obtained the documents attesting to the payment of this amount – they have the necessary stamps, documents, but they avoid to issue them. Taking into consideration the cost of a CPD in Romania and the related guarantee, we considered this cost acceptable for a two-way travel, by comparison; only the long time spent there slightly affected our travelling schedule.

No Visa or Mastercard cards can be used in Iran, but only cards issued by the local banks. Accommodation booking can be made on the English Internet pages, orientated to offer mainly accommodation in the Middle East, and not on popular EU websites. Also, one can find maps on the websites dealing mainly with the Middle East. An easy way is to upload a route on the mobile phone or GPS from Google Maps, using an internet connection before entering Iran, and then use the positioning on the uploaded map – stored in the memory, without any data connection – which is not available anyway. The information regarding the working hours at the Bajgiran border crossing point, where we would cross the border to Turkmenistan the next day, which is open only 6 hours a day between 08:00-14:00, made us hurry up on the way to Teheran, which was more than 900 km away from Bazargan, where we were at that time. The next day, from Teheran to Bajgiran we had to travel other 900 km before 2 p.m.! It was 12:00 o'clock and we had to travel 1800 km until the next day, by 2 p.m.!! The good thing is that all guiding and traffic signs – speed limitations, etc. – are also in the English language, which makes it impossible for you to get lost.

In Iran, the only single-lane road segment is 200 km long, from Bazargan to Marand, which also goes through several localities where works are still in progress, therefore the traffic may be slightly difficult during the day. A lot of police crews everywhere, all of them with radars. Police cars are white, on some of them Police is written in blue also in English, recording pictures on both traffic ways. Radars are portable, held by the police officers in their hand or placed on a stand. There are no speed limits problems for commercial vehicles, – on a single-lane road, the limit is 85 km/h during the night and 95 km/h during the day, and for the cars the limit is 110 km/h on express road, on the second lane, while trucks and buses, like cars, are limited to 100 km/h on the first lane; on the highway, the speed limit for cars is 120 km/h on the second and third lanes, and 110 km/h on the first lane for cars, trucks and buses. Over the road section between Bazargan and

Marand we talked to the traffic police twice. The first time the police officer standing in the middle of the road stopped us and told us that we overtook a car crossing the continuous line, but when checking the video recording in their car – their cars are equipped with approx. 40 cm screens in front of the passenger on the right, underneath the board, they saw that we had not crossed the continuous line, and they let us go. The second time, we were stopped in the last moment by an officer standing in the middle of the road, when he realised that the car had foreign number plates. Traffic police may also stop commercial vehicles, but there is also a control bodies for professionals. From Marand to Tabriz, there is a two-lane toll-free express road of approx. 70 km. From Tabriz to Teheran, 630 km, one can take the three-lane highway, paying a symbolic toll, or a parallel national road. The toll for the car, by segments, was 5000 Rials, 15000 Rials, 18000 Rials, i.e. approx. \$ 3 in total, according to the bank exchange rate.

Starting approx. 150 km before Teheran, the highway is lighted, just like the traffic nodes area close to the cities it passes by.

150 km before Teheran we scheduled a meeting at the hotel where we stayed, and we managed to arrive 20 minutes late, 10 of which because we missed the exit to the hotel and we had to take a detour. We were able to arrive so easily because Teheran, although it is huge city, has boulevards with 3 and 4 lanes which do not cross one another at the same level, being designed with suspended and underground passage ways, as well as an interesting system for avoiding left turns at the crossroads – you go to the right and, within one km, there is a turning point with a separate square, on two lanes, additionally widened from the existing road, and thus allowing you to turn being protected by the square against the traffic flow from the direction on which the turn is made, over a distance of several hundred meters, then the boulevards come back to their initial width of 2, 3 or 4 lanes. We spent 2 hours with His Excellency, Mr. Cristian Teodorescu, Ambassador, and Mr. Esmaeil Tekyeh Sadat, Manager, then we slept 3 hours.



ARARAT Mountain in ARMENIA is sufficiently close to be seen with the naked eye. The mountain is situated at the border between Turkey and Iran and the Azerbaijan enclave in Armenia. Turkey has no border point opened with Armenia since 1993. To go to Erevan, the capital city of Armenia, one must take the route through Georgia. Romanian citizens do not need a visa in Georgia, but they need one for Armenia. Erevan – the city of the famous old jokes with radio Erevan, where listeners used to ask questions and the radio station would answer.

A listener asks “Is it true that, following the Chernobal nuclear accident, people have begun to loose their teeth?” Radio Erevan answers: It is true! If you don’t keep your mouth shut, you’ll loose your teeth!”.

Or, another listener asks “Is it true that a Volga car can take a curve at a speed of 125 km/h?” Radio Erevan answers: “It is true! But only once!”

Another listener asks “Is it true that in Russia corn grows as high as the telegraph post?” Radio Erevan answers: “It is true! But it is as rare as the posts, too!”.

A listener asks “Is it true that, following the trip made by comrade Iuri Gagarin to the space, he received a Volga car?” Radio Erevan answers: “It is true! With the following three remarks: 1. It was not a Volga, it was Pobeda. 2. It was not a car, it was a watch. 3. He did not receive it, it was stolen from him!”.





The two-row truck line covers 3-5 km. This means, between 300 and 500 trucks. In certain cases, the queue can be 7-8 km long, which means at least one day of waiting and crossing the border the following day. The two-row truck line covers 3-5 km. This means, between 300 and 500 trucks. In certain cases, the queue can be 7-8 km long, which means at least one day of waiting and crossing the border the following day.

Both Turkey and Iran claim to be operating 24/7 at the Gurburlak/Bazargan border crossing point. It should be added that, summing up the time when all workers are at their work stations is limited to 6 hours every day – between 08:00-14:00 Iran time. For the rest of the time, there may be missing an official from a position one cannot cross without. Malevolents say that Turkey has asked Iran to agree on opening another border crossing point, arguing that the existing one does not have the necessary capacity to take over the flow of trucks, buses, cars and people, and that Turkey makes every possible effort to demonstrate the need for a new border crossing point, by maintaining huge queues and considerable waiting times. The disagreements regarding the location and opening of a new border crossing point have an impact upon long distance international transports, in particular, and less upon small border traffic – by carriage, car, van or pick-up cars, or actual trucks, even if older.

L category Mercedes (1924) and its siblings were manufactured in Germany in since 1959 until 1995!! Long after the vehicle was taken out of use on the German market, the truck was produced and sold due to its excellent appreciation from the users who, for a long time, paid more for the water than for the Diesel fuel! 1924 and 2624 models are still manufactured under the name of Khavar by Iran Khodro Diesel Company, together with Actros, Axor, Atego, and also Faraz from Sinotruck and other Hyundai utility vehicles, such as Mighty.

Scania Vabis L76 from the 1967s is popular in Western Iran.





R600 and RS RL 700 Mack models produced between 1966-1979, by Mack Iran Kaveh, are the most popular, but several older models are also encountered.



Scania T 143 H since the beginning of the '90s is also used for neighbouring international transport.





Zamyad – extremely popular. It can be seen in any colour, as long as it is blue!



Leyland (today “a Paccar” company, operates DAF) and Chevrolet since the 60s are exotic even on Iranian roads.



Mercedes 1924L and 2624LK were produced between 1959 and 1995 in Germany, and presently the two models are still manufactured by Iran Khodro Diesel Company, former Kord Iran National, together with the current models Actros, Axor and Atego, as well as by the Mercedes engine factory.

GOOD NEWS: MATER, the CARS cartoon hero, IS REAL, here close to Meyamey in Iran!



The only single-lane road segment is between Bazargan and Marand, of approx. 200 km. Here we could meet the living history of 40-year old trucks: Mercedes, Mack, Scania, Volvo and Leyland, beautiful models with a nose, still operating, many of them in good condition and difficult to understand how they could be maintained, both in terms of their body, and engine – seriously loaded, they emanated visible smoke. But Mercedes and Mack are most popular both in the West of the country, and in the East, being highly present up to the border with Turkmenistan; and it seemed that the ones seen in the East, from Mashhad to Afghanistan, are better maintained than in the West of the country.

There are also modern SAIPA DIESEL and AMICO trucks, produced in Iran by several producers – putting together various car and truck models both under a license, and also internally developed. Iran is the 12th vehicle producer in the world, with an annual production of approx. 1.4 million cars and approx. 35,000 commercial vehicles, and the car industry in Iran is the second in size in this country, its contribution to the GDP being of approx. 10%. Although there are more than 12 car producers, the first two companies are Iran Khodro and SAIPA, together representing more than 90% of the market.

Iran Khodro Company (IKCO) is the former Iran National, founded in 1962, and it is the largest car producer in Iran. IKCO has 12 production sites, 6 of which in Iran.

For over 30 years, Iran Khodro has produced Paykan, a car developed from the Rootes Group's Rootes Arrow range, more popular than Hillman Hunter. The production of Paykan sedan was suspended in 2005, almost 30 years after the production of Arrow (later than Chrysler Hunter) in Great Britain. The Paykan pick-up version is still being produced, under the name of Paykan Bardo. On the road between Tabriz and Teheran, one can see how they carry the car bodies to Tabriz and the finished cars to Teheran. Paykan delivers the car in any colour, as long as it is cream! Similar to Henry Ford's motto when promoting T model: we offer it in any colour, as long as it is black – which was actually the only one available! If you want to buy a Paykan, you should hurry up, because it is going to be replaced by a pick-up from the Samand family.

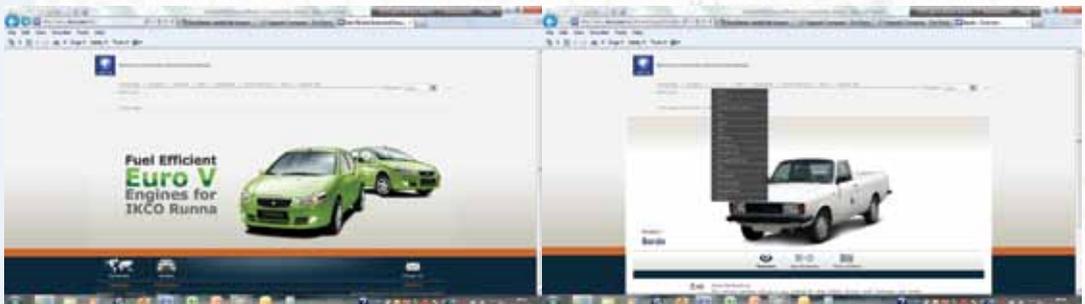


Samand car, designed by IKCO, replaces Paykan as the “national car” in Iran, offering alternative Compressed Natural Gas/gasoline drive with the Soren version. In Iran, gasoline is considered to be extremely expensive, for 7000 Rials a liter, or 2 liters for one dollar, which is indeed expensive compared to Diesel fuel – which, subsidised, is purchased for 1500 rials/liter, or, unsubsidised, 3500 rials/liter.

IKCO puts together Peugeot 206, Peugeot Pars, Peugeot 405, Peugeot Roa, and Samand sedan, exported to Azerbaijan, Iraq, Armenia, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Syria and Afghanistan.

The Logan is popular in Iran, but here it is known as Renault Tondar. It is produced by Renault Pars Company – established in 2003, 51% being owned by Renault France, and 49% by IKCO, SAIPA and the Iranian Organization for Industrial Development and Modernization.

At [www.ikco.com](http://www.ikco.com) you can see the entire range of car models.



IKCO produces trucks, buses and class E cars under Mercedes license, but it also has collaborations with Suzuki – Grand Vitara.

IKCO produces Mercedes Actros, Axor, Atego trucks, and it still produces 1924LK and 2624 LK!!! For both trucks and cars, it produces the latest models, and also history!

The truck range can be seen at <http://www.ikd-co.com>

SAIPA – (the acronym for the French company Société Anonyme Iranienne de Production Automobile) was established in 1966, 75% being owned by Iran, to assemble Citroen under a licence, for the local market. Today it manufactures mainly Coreean cars, collaborates with Proton from Malaysia to replace SAIPA Pride, but it also has its own products. The main SAIPA subsidiaries are SAIPA DIESEL, Pars Khodro and Zamyad Co.

SAIPA DIESEL <http://www.saipadiesel.com> produces Volvo trucks FH12 – FH480(4X2), FH440(4X2), FH440(6X2), FH440(6X4), FH610(6X4), Volvo FH16 (6X4), Volvo FM9 - FM440(6X4), SAIPA DIESEL Budsun, Saipa Diesel Budsun NB8, Nissan Diesel Alborz T375 (4x2 and 6x4), Volvo distribution trucks FM 330 (4x2), FM440 (6X4), FM 440 (8X4), Renault Midlum and Nissan Diesel Aumark, in several versions each. The partners for car manufacturing are VOLVO, RENAULT, DONGFENG, and FOTON, and for the buses, also YUTONG.

Pars Khodro <http://www.parskhodro.ir> produces Renault Tondar 90, Megane, Nissan Murano, Roniz, Maxima, Pickup, Teana, Qashqai.

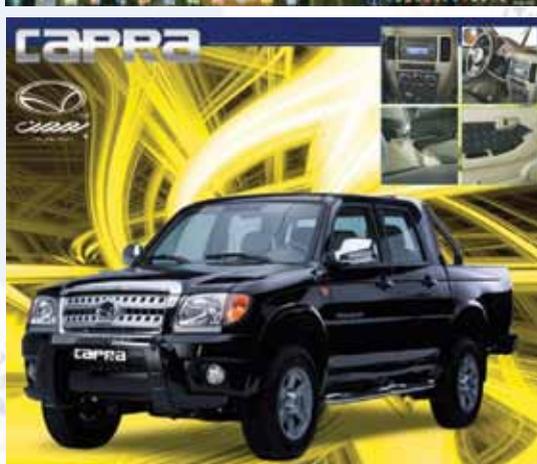
Zamyad – was established in 1963 as a member of RENA Industrial Group in Teheran. In 1974, the company started the production of N model Volvo trucks. In 1998, SAIPA took over Zamyad and started the production of the blue model Z24, based on a license of Nissan Junior version produced in the 70s- 80s, with an engine of 2.4 liters, and, starting with 2003, it was sold under the Zamyad brand.

AMICO - Azar Motor Industrial Company (established in 1989), <http://www.amicoir.com/en> produces heavy and lihght trucks very similar to MAN.

MAN trucks are produced in Iran by Fath Khodro.

Arya Diesel Motor, established in 2005 in Iran, produces Renault Premium, Magnum and Kerax trucks.

Renault Trucks from France is a member of AB Volvo Company, the other group companies being Volvo Trucks, Mack Trucks and Nissan Diesel Trucks. Renault hold less than 20% of AB Volvo shares. AB Volvo is the second truck producer in the world, the first in Europe – according to the website <http://www.aryadiesel.com> The largest truck producer in the world is Daimler AG (Mercedes-Benz, Freightliner Trucks, Sterling Trucks, Unimog, Western Star, Fuso, BharatBenz).



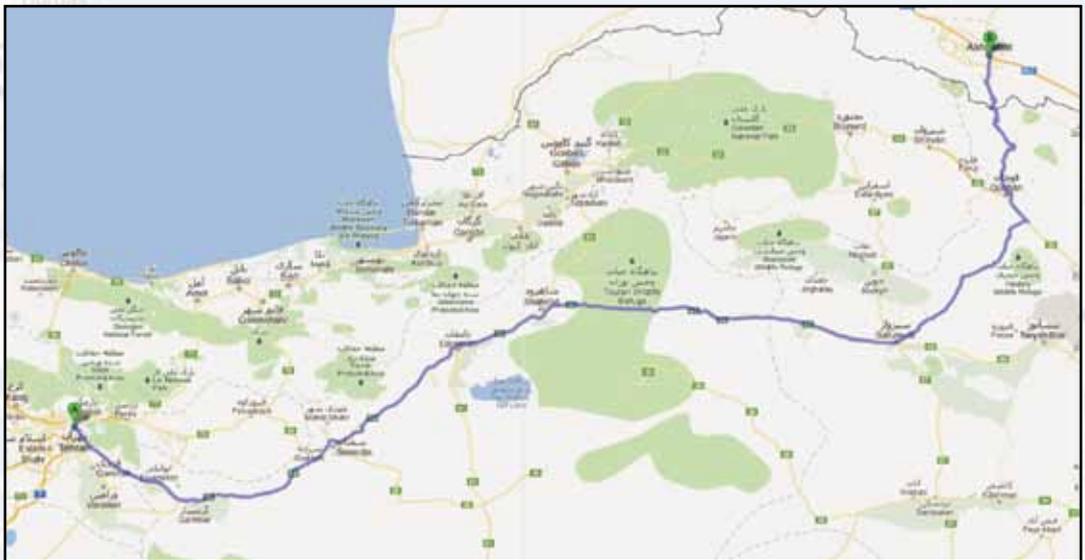
BAHMAN GROUP, established in 1952, <http://www.bahmangroup.com> produces under a license Mazda 2 and 3, FAW J6 Cap Tractor (China license), Capra Pickup, Siba Van, Isuzu Minibus, Isuzu Truck, Mazda Pickup 2000.

Another producer is Rakhsh Khodro Diesel, producing light trucks under a JAC Chinese license (Jianghuai Automobile Co Ltd), trucks under KAMAZ and <http://www.rakhshkhodro.com>

#### **Day 4. Teheran – Ashgabat 941 km**

**Route: Teheran - Semnan (belt) - Damghan (belt) - Shahrud (the road by-passes the city) – Sabzevar (belt and partly through the city) – Quchan – Bajgiran – Ashgabat.**

We tried the Teheran exit to FirouzKouh, due to the 30 km highway segment, parallel to a three-lane express road, but the localities crossed after the highway up to Firouzkoih and the single-lane road of 60 km, from Firouzkouh to Semnan, show that it is worth using the direct route Teheran – Seman on the two-lane express road exiting Teheran by the South-East. The Teheran – Mashhad road is a two-lane road. We travelled 160 km from Sabzevar to Quchan, and then another 80 km to Bajgiran, these last 240 km being on a single-lane road, of excellent quality, except for a segment of approx. 15 km.



With approx. 9 million inhabitants, Teheran is the largest city in Iran. In the vicinity of Teheran, over a radius of 30-40 km, there are plenty of satellite cities, of which Karaj with 1.7 million inhabitants. We managed to arrive at 13:40 at the Bajgiran border crossing pont, where again we found a polite English speaking Iranian customs officer, the efficient passport control frontier police, but two customs commissioners started an argument related to the processing of our existing documents (although no fee is paid when exiting the country, just a small tip for the commissioner, of maximum 20\$). The argument was between the customs commissioner who had taken over our documents and the commissioner who was the correspondent of the Bazargan officers when entering Iran. The procedure did not take more than 30 minutes, the customs and the passports, but, to our surprise, the customs commissioner withheld the car transit document, explaining that we would take a new one when coming back. We refused to hand it over, knowing from the Bazargan officers

that the transit document is also valid for the return. We called the Bazargan officers using the local commissionaire's mobile phone, and this time they confirmed that it was only valid on one way! Nice people! It should be noted that no customs worker has ever asked for or implied that they wanted any tip or anything from us. We handed over the documents and exited Iran. In Iran, both when entering the customs area, and when exiting it, the passports and visas need to be registered by the militaries in a special register – the procedure takes maximum 2-3 minutes.

We entered Turkmenistan, and the (simple) passport registration procedure was very quick, and then we went ahead 100 m towards the Golestan terminal. We entered and presented our passports to the passport control officer, but he refused us firmly saying that we first needed to go to the bank, which we did, after we saw a door on which Bank was written; although it was open, there was nobody inside. We waited for 15 minutes and nothing happened. We went back to the passport officer, this time presenting the invitation to the conference organized by the Turkmenistan Government, in Russian, signed by the minister of foreign affairs. The officer told us politely, using the little English he knew and us using the little Russian we knew, that we first had to pay 10\$ each at the Bank and then come back. We waited 15 more minutes without any result, during which we began to read the papers posted on the walls and we ended up seeing something in Romanian: the list of 74 drugs and substances which are forbidden to be introduced in Turkmenistan, among which a drug with codeine content – it was rather drastic, especially that I remembered about something told by someone from Iran, that some guy he knew spent 6 months in prison in Turkmenistan for possessing forbidden substances, although they were prescribed by a physician from Iran. If the drugs are found at the detailed examination at the entrance point, they are withheld, filling out a form which is signed by each travelling person, stating that he/she carries no forbidden substance with him/her. If any forbidden substance is subsequently found upon that person, there is a big problem! We asked for a luggage scanning military for assistance, and he let us understand that someone was coming to the Bank. Approx. One hour later, a woman came, wearing a traditional long dress and patterned shoes, who knew a little English, and who kindly charged us for \$22 and issued only one receipt for both passports, which was then immediately accepted by the passport officer, who "Welcomed" us in English after stamping our passports. Then our luggage was scanned, and then opened in a special place, all drugs being taken out of the luggage and carefully examined on a special desk by a lady officer – which is very good considering the harsh regulations, because no one wants to spend some time in prison in Turkmenistan for an aspirin or I don't know what. We signed the forms, stating that we had no forbidden substances on us, and entered Turkmenistan. The car was subject to a control procedure, when the chassis number was verified, and we paid the various duties, on the same paper, but each payment and permit and stamp was obtained from a different place, depending on the type of duty to be paid, and, very likely, managed by a separate authority, similar to how it used to be in Romania until not long ago. After everyone manifested their wonder about our car – because it is diesel and no one has a Diesel car, neither in Iran, nor in Turkmenistan, we managed to put our luggage in the car and go down for 25 km on a mountain road, to the exit point from the secure frontier area, where we had our passports and visas registered in 5 minutes, and that was it! Within less than 10 km, we were entering a white and golden gate to the new city area, passing under impressive road flyovers, where all the buildings are covered in white marble, the asphalt is of the best quality, the traffic lights have LEDs, with time-clocks on the yellow light, digital time displays and other traffic signs, all of these on shining stainless steel frames. Archabil Boulevard, a 4-lane arterial highway, is flanked to the right and left by a two-way street for access to the sights bordering the boulevard! The gasoline price, besides the monthly quota of 120 liters granted to each citizen for free, is of approx. 0.60 Manats/liter, i.e. approx. 5 liters for \$1! According to the information we have, the population does not pay for the gas, electricity or heating consumption, all of these being borne by the Government, and even the bread and food, in certain quantities, are subsidized. The plane fleet is new, and the

ticket plane from Ashgabat to Turkmenbasy is something like 20 Dollars for 570 km.

And now a complicated story, due to our carelessness ..... or the Iranian lesson – hats off! We left Bucharest on May 12th, and we arrived in Ashgabat on May 15th – through Iran, driving a Audi A4 diesel car, like any regular person.

The coming back was a bit more adventurous – they caught us with 193 km/h 45 km away from Sabzevar on the way to Teheran (600km East of Teheran), we had a friendly talk with them, gave them \$50 and left. We had booked 2 nights at Espinas Hotel in Teheran. The following day were going to pay a visit to the Romanian Ambassador in Teheran, His Excellency Cristian Teodorescu, an excellent speaker of academic Farsi – a fact instantly recognized by any Persian interlocutor.

400km later, during a police control, we realized that Cornel did not have his passport with him. We explained to the police officer that he had forgotten his passport 400 km behind, but he did not understand anything until I showed him my passport and explained by gestures that his passport was in ... Meyamey (a city situated less than 260 km away, whose name I remembered by analogy with an interesting pronunciation of the city name of Miami); the guy was reasonable and indicated that we should go back for it, but Cornel was no longer allowed to drive, so I took the wheel.

Before leaving, because the phone had a signal and was working (you have a signal 200 km to the East, but our Vodafone or Cosmote phones are unusable) I managed to call a friend from Teheran and tell him what happened. The time was 18:30. {I also called the Ambassador, sent him an SMS, but the communication did not really work. We had had dinner with my friend and the Ambassador when transiting Teheran to Ashgabat. We had scheduled the meeting when we were 150 km away, had arrived 10 minutes late, had had dinner between 22:00-24:00 before leaving to Ashgabat, after 2 hours of sleep (the Bajgiran/Gaudan customs in Turkmenistan was open only until 14:00 o'clock), just like the Bazargan customs when entering Turkey.} Going back means having to drive a significant distance and, anyway, I turned on the empty space in between the traffic ways, where we had some access and also the possibility to drive on the middle area; otherwise, a special turning point can be thousands of kilometres away. When existing the cities, within several kilometres there are one or two U-turn points, for those who realize that they took the wrong direction, but here we were 20-30 km away from the city, and there was no turning point in this direction.

Before losing the phone signal, I also called an emergency number, 110, where the operator answered promptly, but the language barrier made him hang out quite abruptly, which made me try two more times, unfortunately with the same result – it would be good if they had an English speaking operator at the emergency dispatcher, like they have at the border crossing points. Then I went back the 400 km within 2 hours and a half! At 21:00 we arrived in the area and started to stop at the local police stations where we thought that we could find the police crew who had stopped us that day.

The smiling police officers were trying to help us, but the language was a very serious barrier – after ten minutes of explanations and gesticulating, showing my own passport and then pointing towards Cornel, that he did not have it, and then than his passport was at the police, and after several discussions among the police officers, we had no result.

We arrived at Sabzevar when it was already dark, we found a hotel, Kamelia - OK, it was difficult to talk to them, but a young man who spoke English was on the night shift. I gave him EUR 50 and told him to look for the passport. He said that his wife, who was on the same shift, had some

connections through some relatives with the local police.

Here, in Eastern Iran, even if there is a telephone signal – IT DOES NOT WORK! Nor the SMS, nor the voice! At midnight I was in the hotel lobby, where they had wireless Internet connection, cancelling the first night booked at the Teheran hotel where we were supposed to spend the night, telling them that we were coming for the second night. In the meantime, the reception guy, Mostafa Arshian, came and told me that he had found the passport – it was at the head of the local police, but it was accompanied by a report for the speed of 193km/h and a \$50 note attached – attempted bribery!!!!!!!!!!!!!! I asked Mostafa to assist us the following day, so that we may get away with that! At 08:00, after his shift ended, Mostafa and his wife went with us to the traffic police, where the head officer had the passport on his desk, together with the report and the \$50 note. The head of the traffic police, a calm and educated person, told us that there was nothing he could do but follow the procedure. Cornel signed a document written in Persian and we asked Mostafa (our man) to say that we considered the amount of \$50 paid as fine, not bribery!!! He wrote this mention for us. With the documents issued by the traffic police in a sealed envelope (without the passport), we were sent to the green police, who makes investigations – something like the prosecutor's office; you enter the premises surrounded by barbed wire and guarded by armed soldiers, without the cell phone – you must leave them when entering the unit, in locked boxes. There were open cells inside, and they brought 3 guys with a pick-up car – on the platform, some of them with handcuffs, other without handcuffs. All soldiers wore a gun and handcuffs hanging on the hip. They opened a file, prepared lots of papers, then they sent a soldier who accompanied us by car to the judge. If the judge's verdict was "dismissal" – the soldier would have definitely executed it. I tried to explain to the judge that we believed Iran was different from the image presented by the Western mass-media, and that was why we were travelling 4000 km by car to see what were the conditions for the carriers and to be able to recommend the route. I explained that we considered that amount to be the fine, not bribery, but, if he wanted to apply a sanction, it should be moderate, just to teach us a lesson, but not for bribery. The judge – a smart guy, wearing a suit, around his forties, asked me smiling "And how did you know what the fine was for your offence?" I couldn't tell him that the police officers had asked for \$50, which was true, so I explained to him that we knew that in Iran \$20 was a pretty high fine, therefore we considered that \$50 covered a serious offence like ours. The man opened the criminal code, which was obviously in Persian, and he showed us the red bordered pages, stating that the punishment for bribery was between 3 and 6 months of imprisonment! Mostafa, who translated for us, confirmed that this was indeed written there. The judge talked to us for a while, then he told us that he wanted to show us the true face of the Iranian people – welcoming and tolerant, therefore he would show us maximum clemency – which he did – and gave us back our \$50 – drafting the case closing documents. May the Good Lord give him health, a long and happy life! He truly showed us an extraordinary face of the people!!! Then we started the same circuit all over again, they prepared some more documents at the prosecutor's office, and then at the traffic police, where they drew up more papers and reports, sent them by fax and waited for Mashad's approval. The head of the traffic police invited us to his office, served us with tea and coffee, and we talked about traffic safety in Iran and Europe. There were plenty of wall monitors inside the police station, which was situated at the Sabzevar entrance from Teheran, taking over images and data from the video cameras placed on the route under their observation – several tens of kilometers at least.

6 hours later, when we had a file opened, a judgement, a resolution passed and enforcement, we left for Teheran, at 2 p.m. In Romania, we cannot help making a comparison, the same procedure would probably take 6 months up to 2 years. On the way to Tehran, at Semnan (200 km East of Teheran), we lost 1 hour trying to find Diesel fuel – this is available only for trucks, the gas stations for cars only sell gasoline, because there are no Diesel cars in Iran; thus, although it seemed logical to us that, if we followed the city belt to the other end of the city, we would find a Diesel fuel station,

well, it did not happen, so we had to go back within the next 7-9 km, and enter the city. We stopped in front of a military who was on duty by the side of the road and asked him about “gazoil, not benzin”, and the man indicated a gas station with his hand – which station was actually closed (or, better said, it hadn't been opened, because it was new and still under construction for the final fittings); curious, the military pointed at us, asking something in Farsi, but, since we couldn't understand, he added “Americans?” You can pretend to be anyone in this world, but trust me, it is not a good idea to pretend to be an American in front of an Iranian soldier. We went ahead and stopped in front of a car showroom, with a big off road car inside, behind the glass window – the Toyota Tundra type, and a man who had come with his old Peugeot to show it for buyback, directed us to the other side of the city, to a Diesel fuel station – where we met the most honest gas station worked, who gave us the exchange to the last Rials, without making any price artifice, etc. When leaving the gas station, logically, we decided to go back on city belt, not through the city, being already under time pressure. The police stops us just because we had Romanian plate numbers! This time, some police officers were angry that we didn't give them what they wanted, but they were talking in Farsi, so we talked in Romanian, since it made no difference anyway. The spirits went high, I called my friend in Teheran and put him on the phone (this is where the phone begins to be functional) to talk to the police officer, and he told me that the police officer wanted the car transit customs documents – I presented them, but the police officers received another phone call and left us alone, leaving in a hurry.

We arrived at 23:00 to the restaurant where we had scheduled a meeting in the North of Teheran – a city of 8.5 million inhabitants, officially, but unofficially the numbers are a little too much rounded up, of almost 20 million inhabitants.... We could hardly get there, because we had to guide ourselves by the cardinal points, knowing that it was in the North, but the problem was the similarity between the names of two streets from the North area, with very different pronunciation – we were looking for Daraband street, but Darabad street was very long. Pretty much the same, isn't it? Well, Darabad is pronounced like it is written, but when we said Daraband everyone was sending us to Darabad, which we had already covered from one end to the other. Finally, we found out that Daraband was pronounced something like Daarband! Anyway, the distance, no matter how small it may look on any map, on land it is about 10 km, which is nothing compared to the size and infrastructure of the huge city.

We left the restaurant at 2 a.m. and went to the Ambassador's residence. We decided to stay at the hotel – we had a booking – and we went to Espinas ..... but the staff from Espinas had cancelled it... We went to Laleh and here the rates were only in Persian, but the Ambassador knows the language and speaks it academically – he noticed that the rate was \$160, but we asked him to ask the reception men, just to confirm – and he answered \$260!!! But it is written 160 here! (only in Persian) “Yes, but we charge double or, in any case, more for foreigners!!!”

We said OK, but we exchanged some money at the bazar and the next day we paid with Rials, and the rate was lower .....!!!!!!

We met with the TIR head – an older friend – in his office, he gave a paper addressed to the head of Bazargan customs and told him to show me the truck processing procedure, then we left for Tabriz, driving legally, flawlessly. We left at 4:30 a.m. to Bazargan and arrived at 08:00 a.m. At 08:30, Iran time, (07:00 a.m. in Turkey) our documents were ready, a local customs commissioner even helped us checking our passports without having to queue, and especially with the car customs documents - Iran is not a signatory of the temporary import convention. There was another skinny guy gravitating around us, we asked for a tip knowing that we were coming from Romania, but we refused him politely, saying that

we were busy with our customs commissioner – who didn't even ask for any money, letting us give him as much as we wanted – we gave him \$20, like we did at the other frontier.

We were the first to arrive in front of the gliding gate for exiting Iran, which was also closed, like the

Turkish one, leaving some free space for the pedestrians to pass by. Everything seemed to be OK and it was only a matter of time entering Turkey.

Suddenly, a man came with a badge hanging on his neck, who had asked us twice something related to our car and Diesel fuel, but now he was determined that otobus pays gazoil tax EUR 1000, so we had to pay it too. He raised his voice when I told him that it was “Arab”, not otobus! Then he shouted that it was a taxi and a tax had to be paid! We should go back 5 km and pay the tax! How were we supposed to go back when we had no car document, everything was closed and handed over to the commissioner, we had the exit stamps applied on our passport. How much is the tax? EUR 50 ! OK, we'll give you EUR 50! The man, who was already angry, was talking on the phone agitated and yelling at us NO EXIT TURKEY! He took EUR 50, but he said we had to pay 10 more, because he was going to pay it! We gave him 10 more Euros! And he kept on talking on the phone! So I took out a paper written in Persian, from the Chamber of Commerce, addressed to the head of customs, and showed it to him! He left immediately! 5 minutes later he came back with two glasses of hot water, put them on the trunk of the car, took out some tea sachets, cubic sugar. He went to talk to the Turkish guys to let us pass more quickly and then he disappeared! Without giving the money back!

After an hour of waiting, the Iranian gate opened and then the Turkish one, and we entered, together with 11 other Iranian cars.

We waited for half an hour for the documents to be processed and then our documents were handed over to an officer who told us “follow me! 1 minute! white car!” – he drove us to a terminal where he asked us to take the luggage out of the car and go scan them inside, together with the passengers of a bus from Syria.

We had our luggage scanned, put them back in the car and the man came to us smiling, “1 minute! follow me!” We drove after him towards the trucks' terminal, we understood that we were going to have our car scanned. We asked us to take off the luggage and the car was introduced in the scanner barn, and left there. We waited for our man to allow us to take it after the scanning. He said it was OK and that we could put our luggage back in the car. We had just closed the trunk with the luggage arranged inside, when the scanner operator rushed in, asking us to take the luggage out! Everything! Everything! Everything! And faster! We took everything out, he lifted the trunk plate, took it out and asked us to take out the spare wheel, we took it out and reached the ... battery, which is inside the trunk at Audi. Disappointed with his discovery, he continued searching the engine and around the car. We put the luggage back in. Our smiling man asked again for 1 minute! Follow me! This time we went to a garage with a visiting ramp and various tools used for taking the tires off the rims, pumps for taking the fuel out of the tank, a dusty Iranian car at the back of the garage and three cages, a dog inside each of them, embedded in a side wall. An opaque window door which prevented you from seeing anything behind it. A man with an endoscopic camera and portable display came right away, and began investigating the car underneath, and our smiling man took a portable scanner, got inside the car and scanned the ceiling in the area in between the posts! After all these, the large scanner report indicated in 3 squares the areas that could not be scanned: the engine (V6), the board and the ceiling at the sectional porter belt in between the car posts!

We cannot see through the engine! Problem! That's fantastic! I called someone from Turkey, in Ankara and told him that it was too much! They called at the central customs and the central customs in Ankara called the head of Gurburlak customs. I also called our ambassador in Ankara, who asked me why I didn't call him

Earlier – and I told him that I wanted to see how the regular citizen was treated! Then the ambassador said – very well, you can see it now! That's it! I thanked him! He recommended me to call him in advance the next, in order to avoid these situations! He promised he would see what he could do!

Approx. 30 minutes later, the head of customs came and, using more of the gesture language, said

Radu? He pointed – telephone Ankara? I nodded affirmatively, very upset about the treatment we received!

Then he took the car off the visiting ramp and opened the cover! He touched the engine! To see how warm it was! And then he took the dog out of the cage, and it starts smelling the car all around. Then the dog is asked to smell the engine 5 time, to identify any strange substances!

The result was OK, so the head of customs started the car and invited us to his office, serving us with coffee, just to become friends in the end!

Two hours later, the Romanian liaison officer in Turkey called me and told me that two months ago they caught a car with Romanian plate numbers carrying 30 kg of heroine!

How crazy is that! If they stuffed it inside the small Iranian cars, Saipa, Paykan, Peugeot 405 (the old model, with rear traction and leaf springs, the new model with elicoidal springs and front traction) thousands of them crossing the border every day without being scanned, inside the CNG bottles, that would be a great business!



The undersigned, with the ECO Manager - Economic Cooperation Organisation – Mr. Esmaeil Tekyeh Sadat and His Excellency the Romanian Ambassador in Iran – Mr. Cristian Teodorescu.



When going back, at the entrance to Iran, because they could not discover the engine number (the only Diesel engine car in Iran, where the cars are equipped exclusively with gasoline engines), they politely asked us to seal our engine!!! We explained that it was the first time we saw the engine, too, because we only drove the car. Our savior was a professional mechanic, called by one of the customs commissioners, who sealed the engine with confidence – nobody asking about that seal again, not even when exiting Iran.



His Excellency, the Ambassador of Romania in Iran – Mr. Cristian Teodoroescu, the Manager of the TIR Department of the Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Minerals of Iran – Mr. Behnam Faramarzian.





With Mostafa Arshian – the man who helped us enormously in solving the problem in Sabzevar, because he spoke English very well and because he was with us together with his wife from 08:00 a.m., when their night shift at the

hotel reception ended, until 14:00, when we recovered Cornel's passport and left to Teheran - 24h later than our initial travel plan, but free of the accusation of bribing police officers – after covering an entire circuit: traffic police, prosecutor's office, court and then back to each of them.





Audi exhaust pipe, after 3000 km of using Iran Diesel fuel – good cetane number, the engine works flawlessly, but the sulphur seems to be in high quantity, at a certain moment the exhaust pipe deposits started to burn and emanate smoke like some smoke candles attached to the car.

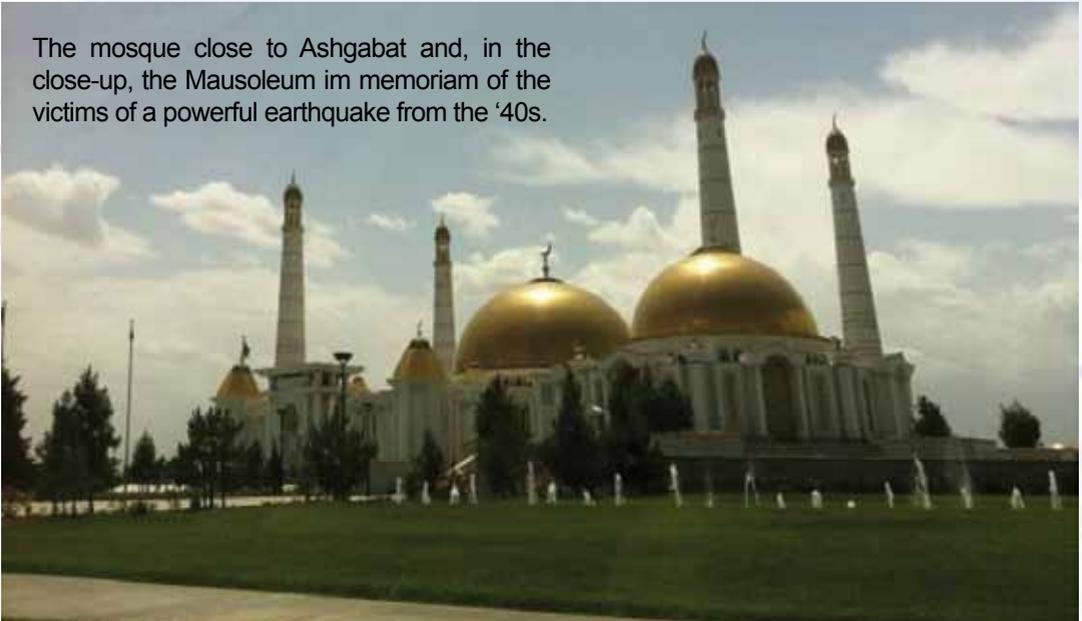


The Neutrality Arch and, on top of it, the full size statue, made of massive gold, of the former President Niyazov, deceased in 2006. Initially the monument was situated in the center of the city, and the statute rotated by the sun during the day. Today the monument is situated in a special area close to the Archabil Bd.

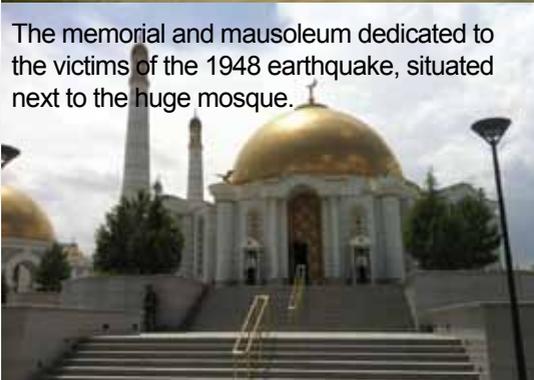




The interior wheel with 24 cabins, 47 m high and 57 m at the base. It includes an entertainment center - Alem, including bowling, cinemas, restaurants and a planetarium.



The mosque close to Ashgabat and, in the close-up, the Mausoleum in memoriam of the victims of a powerful earthquake from the '40s.



The memorial and mausoleum dedicated to the victims of the 1948 earthquake, situated next to the huge mosque.



One of the largest mosques in Central Asia can be found in Ashgabat – the Kipchak mosque, known also as ‘Turkmenbashi Ruhy Metjidi’, built in 2001 by the President Niyazov, on the location where his mother and siblings died during the 1948 earthquake. The minarates are 91 meters high. Approximately 10,000 pilgrims can visit the mosque at one time. Behind the mosque there are special areas for eating after the rituals.



Inside the new Novotel Hotel in Ashgabat (interior ceiling)





Rolls Royce Phantom VI with green (Government) number plates.





The Independence Monument is located in an impressive scene with huge statues made of gilt bronze and with many fountains and running water.





Ashgabat University





The Carpets Museum. There is a carpet model for each of the 5 administrative regions composing Turkmenistan; the 5 models being can be seen on the museum façade.





Turkmenistan Television – an impressive building situated on the hill near the city.





The Ministry of Education – situated also on the impressive Archabil Bd., a building having the shape of a book! The impressive buildings have been built almost 20 years ago by the French company BOYGUES, recently, for approx. 2 years, the VINCI company also entering the market.



The Ministry of Communications – also on Archabil Bd.; some people claim that they can see a telephone shape in this building's architecture.



Hotel President, also on Archabil Bd., a boulevard carrying the same name as the locality close to Ashgabat where the President of the Republic, Gurbangulı Berdimuhamedov, lives, this route being covered daily to the office and back.



The Center for Oncology



The Ministry of Health



Ashgabat Medical University



Winter Sports Complex – The Ice Palace



Ashgabat Polytechnical Institute

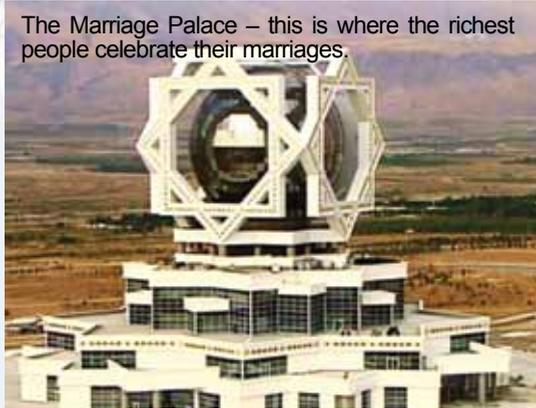


Ashgabat Airport



Bucharest - Ashgabat

The Marriage Palace – this is where the richest people celebrate their marriages.



The President of Turkmenistan

#### Conclusion:

Iran is an extremely interesting and attractive destination for a number of businesses, including international road freight. With the necessary documents and a little patience, the sufficiently long and well paid trips, with significantly lower costs than in the EU, produce interesting profit, keeping you in the business not only busy, elegant and with a negligible profit, like the EU trips. The small obstacles, mainly due to the language barrier, can be easily overcome for those who want to re(conquer) markets operated by the Romanians under the difficult conditions of several tens of years ago.

Turkmenistan is also attractive crossing the Caspian Sea, by ferry from Baku-Azerbaijan to Turkmenbasy-Turkmenistan; it is recommended for you to keep the tractors at Baku and send the semi-trailers by the ferry, and contract a carrier from Turkmenistan to haul it to a certain destination and load it on the ferry for the way back to Baku. There are 93 carrier companies in Turkmenistan, and the strictly applied regulations make it impossible for certain events to occur, such as the semi-trailers' disappearance, etc.

For those who are interested, UNTRR may facilitate contacts and necessary assistance for transport operations to the two countries.