NASR OL-MOLK

What many consider the world's most beautiful mosque is in Persia's most captivating city, Shiraz. Over four millennia older than Islam, over two millennia older than Persia, Shiraz was "Shirrazish," a city of ancient Elam at the birth of civilization in Mesopotamia 5,000 years ago. Even then, Shiraz was famous for wine. A thousand years ago, it was considered the best in the world. Marco Polo praised it. No more. Prior to the Islamic Revolution in 1979, there were over 300 Persian wineries. Now there are none.

Shiraz is still a city of gardens and flowers. At the garden tomb of Persia's most revered poet Hafez (1315-1390), young couples gather for discrete romance as they have for centuries. The beauty of Nasr ol-Molk – with the sun shining through its stained glass windows covering the floor carpets in color, and the interior a dazzling display of pink tile ornamentation – can be overwhelming. The same for the friendliness of the people – always welcoming with a smile for you.

Especially if you are American. All the people we met love America and despise their rulers. The Land of Persia is still here in today's Iran, and someday it will be free, America's ally again. The wine will flow here once more. (*Glimpses of Our Breathtaking World #83* photo ©Jack Wheeler)