



Background

What is Tirgan?

“Tirgan” is a modern-time revival of an ancient Iranian festival, hosted by a not-for-profit, non-partisan and non-religious organization with a mandate to raise awareness about Iranian art and culture. Tirgan festival is a biennial four-day celebration held in Toronto, Canada.

Tirgan 2015

In collaboration with the Harbourfront Centre, Tirgan 2015 will be “the” event of the summer with over 150,000 enthusiasts expected to gather at Toronto’s lakefront to celebrate. Transpiring from Aug 20 – 23, Tirgan 2015 will remain true to the festival’s ancient roots in showcasing the tremendous ethnic diversity within Iran by celebrating the country’s music, dance, theatre, cinema, literature, visual arts and cuisine. The programs of Tirgan 2015 will be united by the central theme of “Homeland”.

The Evolution of Tirgan

The modern Tirgan celebration is not only a product of an ancient festival dating back millennia; but it can also be attributed to a relatively recent evolution that was shaped over the last five years. The modern revival of Tirgan has evolved out of two sister festivals that transpired in 2006 and 2008.

In 2006 nearly 25,000 visitors attended the first festival called “Under the Azure Dome” which celebrated the Iranian new year of Nowruz and explored Iranian art and culture on a scale that was unprecedented in North America. In 2008 the second festival called “Once Upon a Time” which was held to commemorate the ancient Tirgan festival, drew upwards of 60,000 visitors internationally and across Canada.

After the great success of the 2008 festival, the organizers officially adopted the title of Tirgan. This new branding came with a new logo and a fresh and focused dedication to restore the grandeur of the ancient Tirgan celebrations. With a budget of \$648,052.00, over 120,000 visitors, more than 70 performances by over 120 local and internationally renowned artists, and contribution of 300 dedicated volunteers, Tirgan 2011 became the largest Iranian festival in the world making it a true hallmark of Iranian art and culture.

Tirgan 2013, centered on a theme of “Hope”, continued on to bring communities and people together in pride and joy. The festival included over 90 performances by more than 200 artists and attracted over 130,000 visitors.



The Legend of Tirgan

There are many legends on the origin of Tirgan. One is associated with the legend of the arrow (Tir), a reference to “Arash the Archer” who was the best Iranian archer of ancient times. To settle a land dispute, it was stipulated that Arash should ascend Mount Damavand and discharge an arrow whose landing location would determine the boundary between the two kingdoms of Iran and Turan. Arash ascended the mountain and discharged an arrow, the flight of which started from the dawn of the day and continued until noon. The arrow finally landed on the banks of the Jeyhun (*the Oxus*) River and the boundaries of Iran expanded beyond all expectations, resulting in the inclusion of multiple cultures into the nation. And this, is the essence of Tirgan festival: a celebration of diversity.