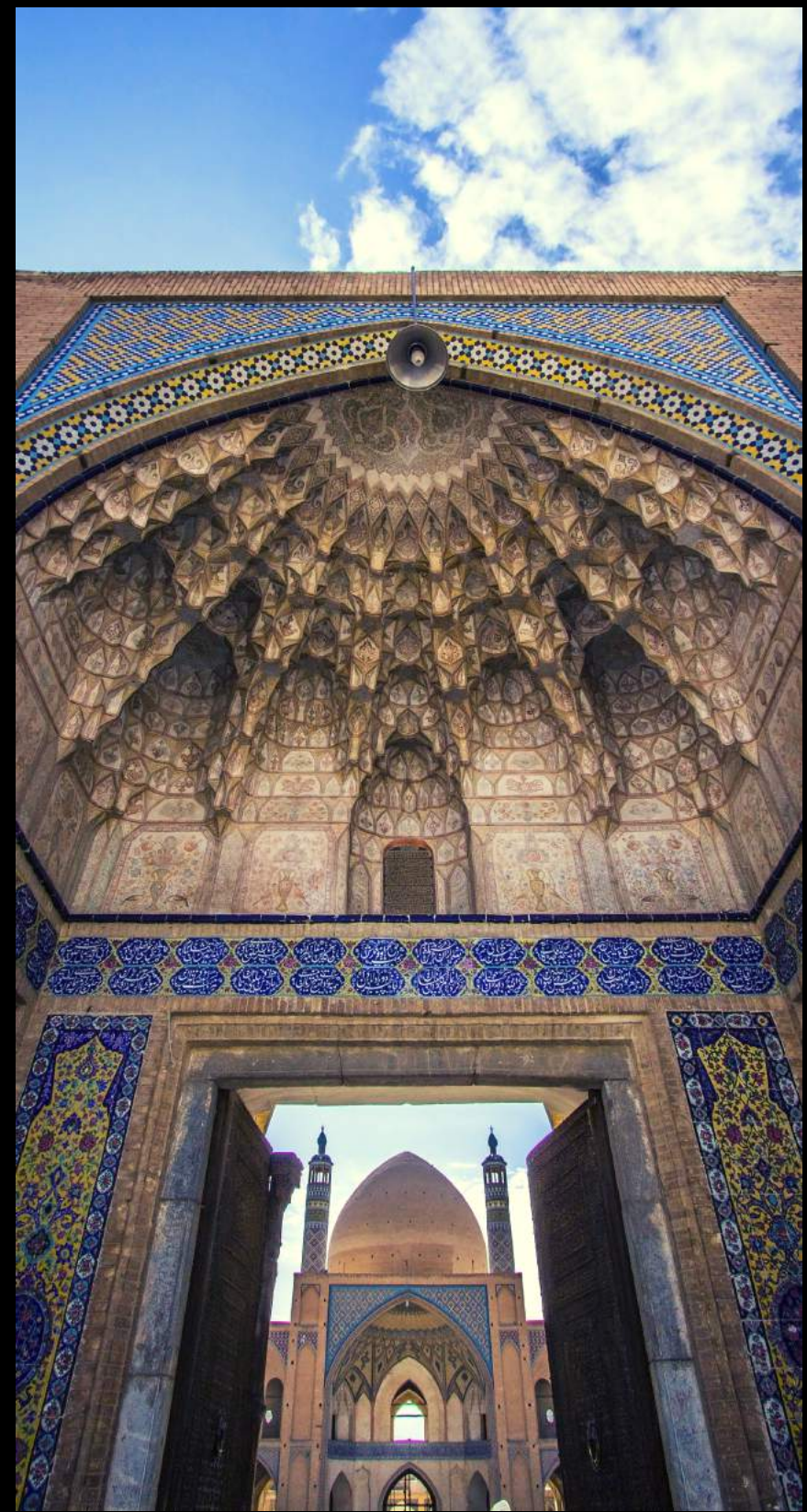


1

Agha Bozorg Mosque and School

Comprising four storeys, including a large sunken courtyard with ablutions pool, an austere dome, tiled minarets and unusually lofty badgirs (windtowers), this decommissioned 19th-century mosque complex is famous for the symmetry of its design. The wooden front door is said to have as many studs as there are verses in the Quran, and the mud-brick walls are covered with Quranic inscriptions and mosaics. A fine portal and mihrab (niche indicating the direction of Mecca) at the rear is particularly noteworthy.

While the mosque has been decommissioned, the madraseh (school) in the sunken courtyard is still in use and women should avoid this area. Entrance is usually free; the only exception is during April and No Ruz.

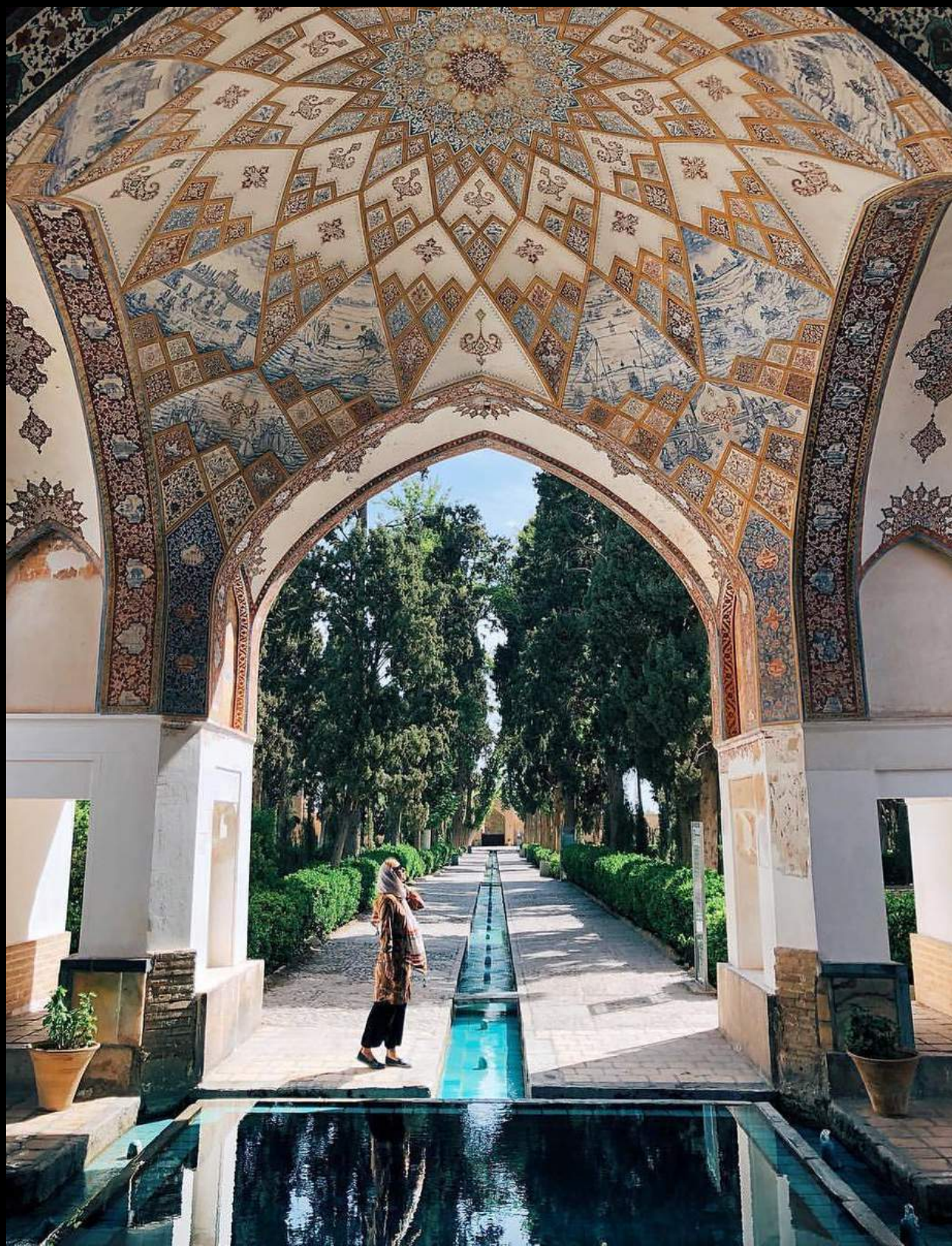




2 Hamam-e Sultan Mir Ahmad

This 500-year-old hammam is a superb example of an Iranian bathhouse. A recent restoration has stripped away 17 layers of plaster (note the wall inside the second room) to reveal the original sarough, a type of plaster made of milk, egg white, soy flour and lime that is said to be stronger than cement. Richly coloured tiles and delicate painting feature throughout, and a further highlight is the panorama of the town's minarets and badgirs viewed from the roof.





3

Bagh-e Fin

Designed for Shah Abbas I in the 16th century, this delightful garden with its symmetrical proportions, old cedars, spring-fed pools and fountains is renowned as being the very epitome of the Persian garden and its evocation of heaven. Given its influence in the planning of gardens as far afield as India and Spain, Fin Garden, which lies in the suburb of Fin, 9km southwest of central Kashan, has justly earned a place on the Unesco World Heritage list.



4

Bazaar

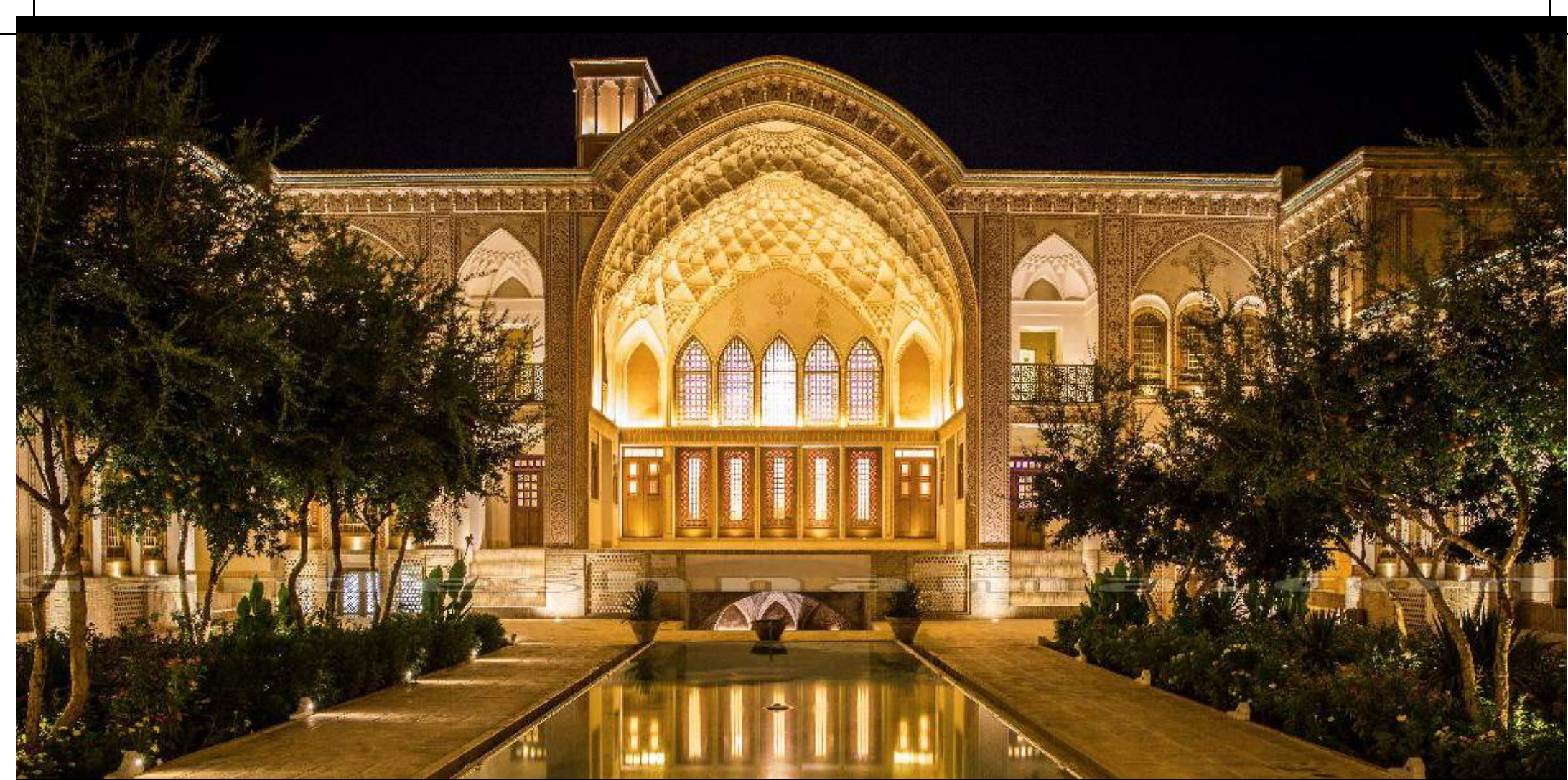
Kashan's historic bazaar is one of the best in Iran. Busy but not manic, traditional but with a nod at modern goods, large enough to surprise but not to get lost in, it's a great place to wander for a couple of hours, especially in the late afternoon when the lanes are full of shoppers. The multi-domed roof of the bazaar dates from the 19th century, but the site has been the centre of trade in Kashan for almost 800 years.

5

Tappeh-ye Seyalk

One of the oldest and richest archaeological sites in central Iran, the Tappeh-ye Seyalk (seyalk means mound), halfway between Kashan and Fin, has yielded interesting pottery pieces, metal tools and domestic implements made from stone, clay and bone that date from as early as the 4th millennium BC. More significant, perhaps, is the structure itself – what is emerging from the dust is clearly a ziggurat (stepped pyramidal temple).





6

Saraye Ameriha Boutique Hotel

Kashan is known for its tourist attractions and more importantly, for its historical houses. One of these historical houses, Saraye Ameriha House is now a Boutique Hotel. Saraye Ameriha Boutique Hotel is the most prominent and outstanding boutique hotel in Kashan. The glory of this hotel is eminent from the seven beautiful yards and the longest windward in the whole city. Talking about the history of this hotel, Ameriha family was the owner of this place. They were the tollman of the silk road passing through Kashan. Later on, Company took the charge of renovating Saraye Ameriha Boutique Hotel and now it is available for the tourists and travelers.



7

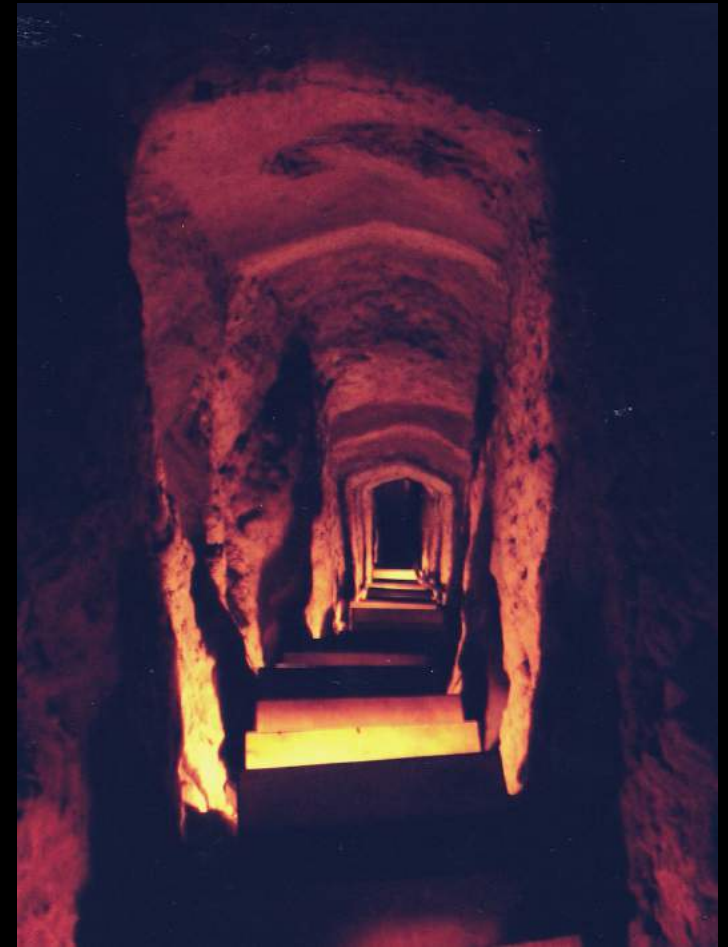
Khan-e Boroujerdi

Legend has it that when Sayyed Jafar Natanzi, a samovar merchant known as Boroujerdi, met with carpet merchant Sayyed Jafar Tabatabaei to discuss taking his daughter's hand in marriage, Mr Tabatabaei set one condition: his daughter must be able to live in a home at least as lovely as his own. The result – finished some 18 years later – was the Khan-e Boroujerdi. Made distinctive by its six-sided, domed badgirs, the house boasts frescoes painted by Kamal al-Molk, the foremost Iranian artist of the time.

8

Nushabad 'Underground City'

This remarkable complex of tunnels, 8km north of Kashan, originally grew up around a freshwater spring, credited with supplying delicious, crystal-clear water. Only part of the tunnel system is open to visitors today, and those parts are often subject to flooding (note the two-colour tone of the walls showing the flood level), but even a quick descent to the first level gives an idea of the complexity of this ancient engineering project.



9

Khan-e Abbasian

Built by a wealthy glass merchant, this handsome set of six buildings (signposted from the hammam) is spread over several levels. The numerous courtyards, which are subterranean – excavated from the soil, not built on top of it – are designed to enhance the sense of space by increasing in size and depth as the complex unfolds. As a result and despite illusion, the multistorey buildings are no higher than neighbouring properties in the old district.

10 Khan-e Tabatabaei

Built around 1880, Seyyed Jafar Tabatabaei's house is renowned for its intricate stone reliefs, including finely carved cypress trees, delicate stucco, and striking mirror and glass work. The seven elaborate windows of the main courtyard (most houses sport only three or five) are a particular wonder, designed to illustrate the high social status of the owner. The house is arranged around four courtyards, the largest of which boasts a large pond with fountains, helping to keep the courtyard cool. From mid-afternoon (depending on the month), sunlight and stained glass combine to bathe some rooms in brilliant colour.

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