

Iran – Treasures of Ancient Persia

Tour Code IR

4 – 18 October 2016

A detailed and comprehensive journey through Iran, concentrating on its rich legacy as the once great Persian Empire. The itinerary allows time for the traveller to appreciate the concept of modern Iran, as well as the stunning Islamic architectural heritage and archaeological monuments of ancient Persia. Highlights of the tour include Persepolis; the great ceremonial capital of the Archaemenid kings and Isfahan, the famous 17th century Safavid capital described then as 'half the world' with its rose gardens, stunning blue domes and tiled minarets.



Sunset across the ruins of Persepolis
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ITINERARY

Day 1 Fly to Tehran

Afternoon departure from London Gatwick with Turkish Airlines via Istanbul. Early next day arrival into Tehran

Day 2 In Tehran

We transfer to the smart Laleh hotel for a two night stay, well located in the centre of the city and enjoy a morning at leisure after our overnight flight. In the afternoon we visit the impressive Golestan Palace and gardens dating back to the Qajar dynasty. We continue to the famous Carpet museum with its fine collection mainly from the 19th century. Welcome dinner in a fine local restaurant (B,D)

Day 3 Fly Kerman

This morning we drive out of the capital to the northern suburbs to visit the last Shah's former residence; Sa'ad Abad Palace. In the afternoon we fly to Kerman, our furthest destination from Tehran. Two nights at the Pars hotel. Dinner in the hotel (B,D)

Day 4 In Kerman. Visit Mahan

This morning we visit the stunning monuments of this ancient city including the Friday Mosque and Vakil Bazaar dating to the Safavid period. In the afternoon we drive to nearby Mahan to see the striking mausoleum of a dervish sufi, Shah Nematollah Vali and the beautiful Shahzadeh gardens. Dinner in a traditional restaurant (B,D)

Day 5 Visit Neiriz. Drive to Shiraz

Our journey into the Zagros mountain region, home to the colourful Qashqai nomad tribe, stops at Neiriz to see its 10th century barrel-vaulted mosque before continuing to the beautiful city of Shiraz, centre of Persian art and poetry, in the province of Fars. Three nights at the Pars hotel with dinner (B,D)

Day 6 In Shiraz

We have a full day to discover historic Shiraz with its wonderful gardens, serene tombs of the celebrated Persian poets Hafez and Sa'adi and authentic covered bazaar. We dine at a local restaurant (B,D)

Day 7 Visit Persepolis

A full day to explore the evocative ruins of Persepolis, built by Darius the Great in 512 BC. We also see the nearby rock-cut tombs at Naqsh-e Rostam where he and his successors lie buried. We return to Shiraz in the late afternoon and dine at a traditional restaurant (B,D)

Day 8 Visit Pasargad and Abarkuh. Drive to Yazd

We journey northeast across the Zagros range pausing at Pasargad, site of the tomb of Cyrus the Great.

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At the oasis town of Abarkuh we visit it's ruined but finely decorated Friday mosque and unusual stone funerary tower. We continue to the desert city of Yazd. Two nights at the Safaieh hotel with dinner (B,D)

Day 9 In Yazd

A city with a beautiful roofscape of blue domes and wind towers, Yazd is the main centre of the mysterious Zoroastrian religion. Today we visit a typical Fire temple where the sacred fire is still kept burning and climb a traditional Tower of Silence, used to place the dead, on the outskirts of the city. We will also visit some of the striking Islamic monuments in the centre of Yazd. Dinner in a traditional restaurant (B,D)

Day 10 Visit Meybod and Nain. Drive to Isfahan

We head north via Meybod, famous for its pottery, to visit the town's citadel. We continue to the carpet-making town of Nain, which houses a splendid Friday mosque retaining much of its Abassid features. Our destination is Isfahan, described as 'half the world' in ancient times. Three nights at the historic Abbasi hotel, one of Iran's most famous. Dinner at a traditional restaurant (B,D)

Day 11 In Isfahan

We spend the morning in this most famous Persian city at the monuments that surround the vast former Royal Square; Ali Qapu pavilion, Sheikh Lotfollah mosque, Imam mosque and the monumental entrance to the grand bazaar. The afternoon is left free to absorb Isfahan's ambience, for shopping in the famous bazaars or relaxing in a teahouse under one of the bridges over Zayandeh river. We dine at a fine Isfahani restaurant (B,D)

Day 12 In Isfahan

We spend the morning enjoying the great 16th century architectural delights of the city including the palace pavilions of Chehel Sotun and Hasht Behesht. We also visit the Armenian quarter of Jolfa and its stunning cathedral. The afternoon is left free for further time to absorb the delights of this beautiful ancient city. Dinner at a local restaurant (B,D)

Day 13 Visit Natanz and Kashan. Drive to Tehran

Heading back to the capital today we are able to spend time at Natanz to visit the impressive shrine of Abd al-Samad and at Kashan, a once important centre for carpets, silk and textiles. Here is one of Iran's most famous gardens, the King's Garden, designed for Shah Abbas. Finally we arrive in Tehran for two nights at the Laleh hotel. Dinner at the hotel (B,D)

Day 14 In Tehran

We visit the National Museum this morning that houses both the country's archaeological wealth and its fine Islamic collection. In the afternoon we see the National Jewels of Iran, an amazing collection of jewellery and precious stones including a 182-carat diamond bought back from India. We finish the day at the fabulous Museum of Glass and Ceramics. Farewell dinner at a smart Tehran restaurant (B,D)

Day 15 Fly to London

Early morning flight with Turkish Airlines via Istanbul to London Gatwick, arriving in the late morning

Cost £2295.00 per person in a twin room (single supplement additional £300)



Stunning turquoise tiled dome and minaret,
Isfahan © www.syderimages.com

Price includes –

- ▶ Tour accompanied locally by a specialist Iranian tour leader/guide
- ▶ Iran Air domestic flight to Kerman
- ▶ All transportation - private a/c coach
- ▶ Full sightseeing programme including entrance fees
- ▶ Quality local five and four star grade hotels with breakfast
- ▶ All dinners included and served at good quality restaurants
- ▶ All airport transfers
- ▶ Porter, hotel and restaurant staff gratuities

A strict dress code is in place in Iran for both men and women travellers

PLEASE NOTE – personal travel insurance, visa fees, guide and driver gratuities, international flights to and from Tehran are not included in the land tour cost

(Included meals denoted by B Breakfast, L Lunch, D Dinner)