

Journey To Persia

13 Days – 12 Nights

Tehran 2N/ Kashan 1N/ Yazd 2N/ Kerman 2N/Shiraz 3N/Isfahan 2N

Type: Historical/Culture/discover

HIGHLIGHTS

- Explore Shiraz, the city of poets, roses and nightingales
- Visit the heart of the Achaemenian Empire, Persepolis
- Discover Isfahan, the old capital and the 'Jewel of Islamic Iran'
- Get lost in the bazaars of Yazd, home to the Zoroastrian Towers of Silence



The Journey to Persia tour starts and ends in Tehran. The Journey to Persia is a Cultural, Religious and Historic Sites tour that takes 13 days taking you through Tehran, Isfahan and other destinations in Iran.

Iran is a country of dramatic contrasts. Its scenery ranges from snow-clad mountains to vast, inhospitable deserts punctuated by attractive oasis towns, and its cities and ancient sites reveal a deep and rich history. Some of the most exquisite examples of Middle Eastern design and architecture are to be found in Iran, including the magnificent ruins of Persepolis, the dazzling Islamic centers at Isfahan and Shiraz, and beautifully-crafted gardens set in desert wastes. The rich bazaars and the ancient tradition of hospitality never fail to impress in a country which sees few tourists.

JOURNEY TO PERSIA

“This was one of the most wonderful trips I've ever made - definitely worth wearing a head-scarf for a fortnight. Iran bombards you with sensations, whether you're staring up at the towering ruins of Persepolis, or delighting in the quenches and glowing tile work of Esfahan's Loftollah mosque, or exploring a bazaar or enjoying the peace of the lake and fountains in Shiraz's flower-filled Eram garden - even on coach



drives across the country, there are incredible mountain ranges to marvel at, as impressive in their magnificence as any of the man-made wonders that Persians, through all the many centuries of their history, have built to commemorate dynasties and their own remarkable creativity. And that's not to mention present-day Iranians - not grey, grim people, as our media would have us think, but amazingly welcoming: people who take a pride in their culture, who love color and fun, who like nothing better than to picnic in one of their very many beautiful public gardens. Often they were keen to talk to us, which greatly added to our visit. Iran is a huge country, so we couldn't possibly see it all. But we did sample its amazing variety. As well as taking in Tehran and the historic cities of Yazd, Kerman, Shiraz and Esfahan, the trip also included a visit to a Zoroastrian mountain village and the troglodyte village of Maymand. Every day was filled with new experiences - a citadel built entirely of adobe, an ornately tiled hamam, a shrine to the poet Hafez, the Towers of Silence, where the Zoroastrians left their dead...Oh, and the bazaars, the bazaars...And all this in the company of a great bunch of like-minded fellow-travelers, whose charm and sense of humour completed the delight."



JOURNEY TO PERSIA

"This really was an excellent trip around Iran, one of the best Exodus trips I have been on. The first week is slightly more 'off the beaten track' and the second week focuses on Shiraz and Isfahan. I reached 'monument overload' on the second-to-last day which was a lot later than I had feared, as the sights, particularly in the



first 10 days, were so varied and generally spectacular. Ladies clothing - a loose fitting shirt that covers the elbows and bottom is fine; trousers can be 'ankle-skimmers' but not 3/4 length, and can be slim fit. Comfy shoes are a must and a loose headscarf at all times. If you can, aim for darker clothes as Iranian ladies tend to wear a lot of black and dark colors. Food - I am semi-vegetarian and (unusually) really struggled on this trip. I normally eat chicken but tend to avoid it when travelling - here I ate loads of chicken as the alternative was vegetables boiled until they were virtually inedible, or in a few places pizza. Lunch wasn't always readily available, this was a general cultural issue (most cafe's served only drinks and chocolate cake).

The nuts were fantastic and bananas were often available, as were biscuits and crisps. I'd taken 2 x quality protein-rich breakfast bars for each day; I wish I'd taken more."



ITINERARY

Day 1: Start Tehran

Those on the group flights arrive very early this morning (or late the previous night) and will be transferred to the hotel. Land only passengers should arrive at the hotel this morning though we do recommend arriving the night before if not on the group flights (this night is included). Tehran is a sprawling metropolis buzzing with people. It is the economic heart of Iran and a modern city with museums, cafes and restaurants. We head out into Tehran and visit the Archaeological Museum with its collections of pottery, bronze and valuable pieces from various ages ranging from millenniums BCE to the Islamic era. We also visit the Abguineh Glass and Ceramics Museum, a valuable collection of pre-Islamic, Islamic and European glass and ceramics displayed within an elegant early-20th Century mansion. Finally, we visit the Carpet Museum with its extensive collection of old and new Persian carpets and rugs from the country's major carpet-weaving centres.

Day 2: Full day sightseeing in Tehran

We see more of Tehran today with full day visits including the Golestan Palace Museum Complex, built by Fath-Ali Shah of the Qajar Dynasty and dating from the 18th to the early 20th century. We continue to the Shams-ol-Emareh (Sun) Palace and the Ethnographic Museum, with walk around the garden to enjoy the beautiful tile-covered walls and buildings. In the afternoon, we visit the fabulous State's Jewels Museum, housed in the vaults of the Central Bank of Iran displaying the



most dazzling and priceless collection of jewels and gems in the world.

Day 3: Visit Kashan en route to the traditional village of Abyaneh

As we leave the hustle and bustle of the Iranian capital behind, we make our way through the desert to

Kashan. This oasis town was a favourite of Shah Abbas who was buried here. Visit the historical garden of Fin which was first planted during the Safavid period and kept alive with water from the nearby Sulaimanieh Spring. This beautiful garden was expanded by the Zand and Qajar monarchs with many open pavilions



added. In Kashan, there are also fine examples of grand 19th Century merchant residences and we will have the chance to visit one these. We continue on to Abyaneh, a small village hidden away in the Karkas Mountains and an Iranian Cultural Heritage Site. The village was originally settled by Zoroastrians fleeing the Arab invasion of Persia and is very traditional with winding alleys of red-mud brick houses adorned with lattice woodwork and balconies. The people of Abyaneh have preserved their ancient culture and traditions over the centuries and dress in colorful clothes.



Day 4: Drive to Yazd, visit Na'in and Mohamadi en route.

After touring Abyaneh, we drive to Yazd. En route, we stop in the town of Na'in to visit the early Islamic period Friday Mosque and the Pirnia House /Ethnographic Museum, a beautiful example of a late Safavid period private house with delicate monochrome painted plaster decoration. We continue to the nearby village of Mohammadiye to see the traditional pit workshops weaving the camel cloaks worn by the Muslim clergy in Iran, before finally arriving in Yazd. (Total drive time about 7hrs plus visits)



Day 5: Visit Ateshkade Fire Temple, mausoleum, mosque and bazaars of Yazd.

We enjoy a full day sightseeing in historic Yazd, the centre for Iran's small Zoroastrian community. Visit one of the two Zoroastrian abandoned Towers of Silence (Dakhma). Dating back to the 18th Century, until some 70-odd years ago the bodies of the dead were carried and left here to decompose and be devoured by birds. The next Zoroastrian site is the Fire Temple which houses a flame which is said to have been burning for over 1,500 years. Amongst Yazd's Islamic sites are the Friday Mosque (1324AD) which boasts the highest portal and minarets in Iran and the Mirchachmagh Maidan and Mosque. Other notable monuments, found in the old Fahadan area of Yazd, are the Saljuk shrine, dedicated to the Twelve Shi'ite Imams; and Ziaieyeh Theological School, also known as Znedan-e-Eskander (Alexander's Prison). Yazd also has many beautiful old houses such as Dowlat-Abad Garden, an 18th Century feudal hexagonal house.



Day 6: Stop in the troglodyte village of Meymand en route to Kerman.

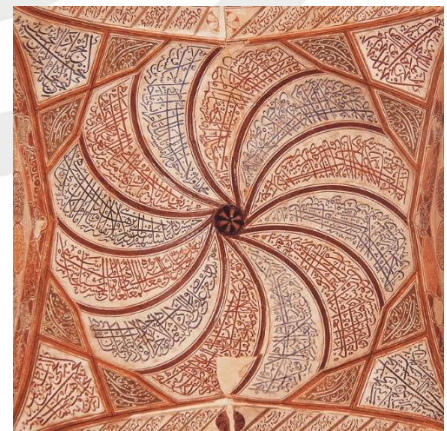
Leaving Yazd, our first stop is the troglodyte village of Maymand. Recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage site, villagers still live in cave dwellings today. We explore the village and visit some of these cave dwellings which have been transformed as show-houses. As the caves are strewn along a slope with rubble, make sure to wear walking shoes or trainers with grip. We continue to the desert trading city of Kerman with



its blend of Persian and Baluchi people (Total drive time 7.5hrs plus visits).

Day 7: Day trip of Arg-e-Rayen citadel (a miniature version of Bam), Mahan and Kerman

We head towards the village of Rayan to visit the Arg (Citadel) of Rayan, a miniature version of the Bam Citadel which was destroyed by an earthquake in 2003. Arg-e-Rayan has all the typical architectural features of a desert Citadel with ramparts, towers, covered lanes and spectacular views of the nearby Mt. Hezar, snowcapped for most of the year. Retraining towards Kerman, we stop in the small town of Mahan to visit the blue-tiled Mausoleum of





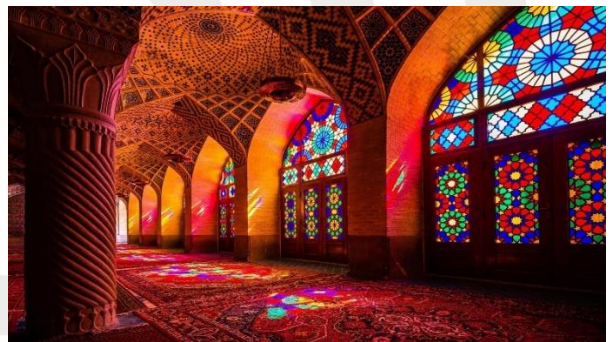
Shah Nematollah-e-Vali, the great 14th century Sufi Leader, and the Shahzadeh Garden (a late 19th century Qajar period house and garden). Back in Kerman we visit the Friday Mosque, the Ganj-Ali Khan Complex and Hammam which has been converted into an Ethnographic Museum. We explore the Maidan (square) with its mosque, madrassa and water cistern all dating back to the 17th and 18th centuries and the Vakil Tea House (another covered bathhouse). We will walk through bazaar. Being a Friday, some shops may be closed but there's still a great atmosphere.

Day 8: Drive to Shiraz

Today is the longest travel day. This is mitigated, however, by the stunning scenery as we cross over the Zagros Mountains and into Iran's fertile Fars region to the city of gardens and poets which is Shiraz. On the way, we visit the remains of the Sassanian Palace at Sarvestan, a fifth century building thought to be a hunting lodge built by Bahram V (9 hrs plus stops).

Day 9: Explore Shiraz, its mausoleums and monumental gardens.

Shiraz, the city of 'roses and nightingales' is the centre of Persian culture, known for its poets, gardens and, at one time, wine which was produced in the fertile valley the city is located in. We spend the day exploring Shiraz's main sites, visiting the expansive Eram Garden; the tomb of Iran's greatest lyric poet: Hafez, a popular spot for local lovers, the pink tiled 19th century Nasir-ol-Molk Mosque with its coloured glass windows, the Arg-e-Karim Khan (an 18th century citadel; the Madrassa Khan where we can



interact with students and the Qajar-period Narenjestan Garden and House, the Vakil Bazaar and the Holy Shrine of Shah-e-Cheragh (though only from the outside if not Muslim as it is not open to non-Muslims).



Day 10: Visit the ancient ruins of Persepolis.

We spend today exploring the heritage of the Achaemenid dynasty in Persepolis and the royal tombs of Naghsh-e-Rostam. Persepolis, the ceremonial capital of the Achaemenid kings with remains of the palaces of Darius the Great, Xerxes and Artaxerxes, is famous for its bas-reliefs depicting kings, courtiers and gift-bearing representatives of tributary nations of the Persian Empire ranging from

India to Ethiopia. We then visit nearby Naghsh-e-Rostam to see Ka'be-Zardosht (a fire temple) and the royal tombs dug into the rock itself. This site also has seven magnificent Sassanian rock-reliefs including Shapur the First's famous victory over Roman Emperor Valerian.

Day 11: Drive to Iran's architectural gem, Isfahan visiting Pasargadae en route.

We head to Iran's greatest city, Isfahan. En route we visit Pasargadae, the site of the simple, but impressive tomb and remains of the palaces of Cyrus the Great, the founder of the Persian Empire (Total drive time 6-7hrs plus visits).



Day 12: Immersion in the beauty of Isfahan

Start the day by exploring Imam Square, the 17th-century site which is also one of the largest public spaces in the world. Visit the Shah Mosque, revered as a masterpiece of Islamic architecture and easily recognized due to its magnificent tile work and a soaring cupola and minarets. Marvel at the beautiful music rooms and



balconies of Ali Qapu Palace and get the chance to explore the Qeisarieh Bazaar, which surrounds Imam Square. With hundreds of local vendors that specialize in traditional arts and crafts, it's a wonderful place to shop for pottery, enamel, jewelry and delicately inlaid board games. Next up is Chehel Sotun. Set in a landscaped and forested park in front of a tranquil reflecting pool, this graceful pavilion was built by Shah Abbas II for entertainment

and court receptions. Enter into the building through a portico supported by twenty slender wooden columns and discover soaring halls embellished with frescoes, paintings and mosaics. The Hall of Mirrors is especially breathtaking!

In the city's Armenian quarter, you'll get the chance to delve more deeply into the region's complex history. Visit several churches in the area, including the 17th-century Vank Cathedral with its lavishly decorated interior and a unique blend of Islamic and European architectural elements.



Day 13: Immersion in the beauty of Isfahan

You have a free day to explore this lovely city, so take time to wander along the City's many tree-lined boulevards and spacious gardens. Visit the

Jameh Mosque (Friday Mosque), the biggest in all Iran and full of lovely designed stuccos, or Afif Abad museum and garden, or you could also discover the bizarre Menar Jonban (shaking minarets). Perhaps head to the Armenian Quarter and the Church of St. Joseph of Arimathea, which has a striking interior of gilded ceilings, walls and paintings. The stunning, delicate artwork of the dome depicts the biblical story of Genesis, from Creation to Man's expulsion from the Garden of Eden. Make sure to take a stroll by the Zayandeh Rood River and stop for a well-deserved tea at one of the stunning bridges. We are approaching the end of the journey hour by hour. Our last dinner is spent in a luxurious restaurant with live music and we go to the airport. It's time to say goodbye and return home.



WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Arrival and departure airport transfers
- 12 nights' accommodation in standard-grade hotels
- Land travel in Iran by air-conditioned coach
- Services of an experienced Iranian tour guide throughout the tour
- 12 breakfasts and 12 dinner
- entrance tickets according to the travel plan

WHAT'S EXCLUDED

- International air fares, taxes and surcharges
- Travel insurance
- Items of a personal nature such as laundry or phone calls
- Visa code application fees
- Tips to guides and drivers
- Visa costs

IMPORTANT NOTE

- Please have in mind that in local house single rooms are not provided unless the client asks us for a single room. Also normally in local house, there are no beds.
- On sea trips in case of bad conditions of the sea the routes and timing may change

- In nature trips in case of climate changes and bad weather, changes in accommodation and programs may occur
- The booking process of the hotel starts upon receiving the flight details.
- Changes in the hotels may occur

RESPONSIBLE TRAVEL

As the executive of nature tours in Iran & Globe, we have assumed our responsibility & role so seriously, know the tourism effect on our surrounded environment & local society, and try to plan & operate our tours in accordance with this foreground thought; For, we believe that the tour executive has a great effect on the means of transferring his/her experiments, to guarantee both the passengers health & environment conservation.

Important:

In cities where there is no 5* hotel, we will have to stay in hotels with highest stars in that city.

HOTEL CATEGORY AND ACCOMMODATION

Cat.	Hotel Name	Location	Nights
5*	ESTEGHLAL	Tehran	2
5*	AMERI HA	Kashan	1
5*	SAFAIYEH	Yazd	2
5*	PARS	Kerman	2
5*	GRAND HOTEL	Shiraz	3
5*	ABBASI	Isfahan	2