

# Iran – Treasures of Ancient Persia

Tour Code IR

## Departing 29 October 2009

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 17<sup>th</sup> century Safavid capital described then as 'half the world' with its rose gardens, stunning blue domes and tiled minarets.



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

## ITINERARY

### Day 1 Fly to Tehran – Thursday 29 October

Evening departure from Heathrow Terminal 2 on BMI (British Midlands) arriving directly into Tehran early the following morning

### Day 2 In Tehran – Friday 30 October

We transfer to the smart Laleh hotel for a three 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 19<sup>th</sup> century. Welcome dinner in a local restaurant (D)

### Day 3 In Tehran – Saturday 31 October

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. Dinner in a local restaurant (B,D)

### Day 4 In Tehran. Fly Kerman – Sunday 1 November

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 5 In Kerman. Visit Mahan – Monday 2 November

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 6 Visit Neiriz. Drive to Shiraz – Tuesday 3 November

Our journey into the Zagros mountain region today stops at Neiriz to see its 10<sup>th</sup> 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 Homa hotel with dinner (B,D)

### Day 7 In Shiraz – Wednesday 4 November

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 to enjoy typical Shiraz dishes (B,D)

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**Day 8 Visit Persepolis – Thursday 5 November**

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 9 Visit Pasargad and Abarkuh. Drive to Yazd – Friday 6 November**

We continue our journey northeast across the Zagros range pausing at Pasargad, site of the tomb of Cyrus the Great. At the oasis town of Abarkuh we visit its 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 10 In Yazd – Saturday 7 November**

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 11 Visit Meybod and Nain. Drive to Isfahan – Sunday 8 November**

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 Abbasid 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 12 In Isfahan – Monday 9 November**

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 local restaurant (B,D)

**Day 13 In Isfahan – Tuesday 10 November**

We spend the morning enjoying the great 16<sup>th</sup> 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 14 Visit Natanz and Kashan. Drive to Tehran – Wednesday 11 November**

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 one night at the Laleh hotel. A farewell dinner has been arranged at a city restaurant (B,D)

**Day 15 Fly to London – Thursday 12 November**

After breakfast we transfer to Tehran international airport for our direct BMI flight to London Heathrow arriving in the early afternoon (B)

**Cost £1795.00** per person in a twin room (excludes international flights)    Single supplement charge £300.00

**Price includes –**

- ▶ Tour accompanied from London by an experienced UK tour manager
- ▶ Specialist Iranian guide for the duration of the tour
- ▶ All transportation - Private A/C bus and Iran Air domestic flight to Kerman
- ▶ Full sightseeing programme including entrance fees
- ▶ Quality local five and four star grade hotels with breakfast
- ▶ All dinners included
- ▶ All departure taxes
- ▶ All airport transfers
- ▶ Porter, hotel and restaurant staff gratuities

Not included – travel insurance, visa fees, drinks, lunches, guide and driver gratuities, BMI international return flight (cost from £450.00 with Polani Travel, ATOL 5311)

*Please note that a strict dress code is in place in Iran for both men and women travellers*

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