

## 14 Days

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Day 1: Shiraz, the city of "Poets and Gardens". Meet and greet at 12:00. Our tour starts at 12:30, where we have time to visit many places of interest – including the Nasir Al-Mulk Mosque, and Naranjestan Palace, before making our way to the evocative Vakil Bazaar to explore its labyrinthine alleys and stalls brimming with exotic spices, sweets, fruits, nuts, and saffron. Later, we'll visit the beautiful Eram Gardens, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and stroll through its orange blossoms and pomegranate trees.

*Overnight: Shiraz*

*Accommodation: Homa Hotel – or similar*

*Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner*

Day 2: This morning we'll take an excursion to see the ruins at magnificent Persepolis, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and ceremonial capital of the Achaemenid Empire before moving on to Naqsh-e Rostom, a spectacular complex of artworks and rock tombs of 4 Achaemenid kings; Darius I, Xerxes I, Artaxerxes I and Darius II, dating back to the first millennium BC. In the afternoon it's back to Shiraz to visit the esteemed tomb of the mystical poet Hafez before heading over to the glittering Shah Cheragh Shrine.

*Overnight: Shiraz*

*Accommodation: Homa Hotel – or similar*

*Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner*

*Travel Times:*

*Shiraz – Persepolis: 1 hour*

*Persepolis – Naqsh-e Rostom: 10 minutes*

*Naqsh-e Rostam – Shiraz: 56 minutes*

Day 3: The third day is spent travelling to the desert town of Yazd, stopping off along the way at the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Pasargadae, where we'll visit the tomb of Cyrus the Great, the founder of the Achaemenid Empire and one of the most important figures in ancient Persian history. Around Pasargadae, we'll have lunch at a very rustic, traditional cottage, where we'll be treated to delicious food and have the chance to experience a traditional way of life, watch performances of local music and even join in the ancient art of carpet weaving. Continue driving to Yazd.

*Overnight: Yazd*

*Accommodation: Moshir al Mamalak hotel – or similar*

*Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner*

*Travel Times:*

*Shiraz – Pasargadae: 1 hour 45 minutes*

*Pasargadae – Yazd: 3 hours 56 minutes*

Day 4: Yazd is home to the Zoroastrian religion, so we'll see The Towers of Silence, the atmospheric burial ground, and a Zoroastrian Fire Temple with a sacred flame which has been burning for thousands of years. We'll also explore Amir Chakhmaq Square, the Yazd Jam'e Mosque and the winding streets of the old neighbourhood before taking an afternoon break in the UNESCO protected Dowlat Abad gardens. In the evening we'll visit a 'Zurkhaneh' – or House of Strength, to watch an ancient sporting ritual which fuses spiritual elements of Zoroastrianism, Shia Islam and Sufism.

*Overnight: Yazd*

*Accommodation: Moshir al Mamalak hotel – or similar*

*Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner*

Day 5: The following day we move on again, with an early morning drive to the glorious city of Isfahan via Meybod to see the mud-brick Narein Castle, Pigeon Tower and the Caravanserai, a 16<sup>th</sup> century roadside inn that once provided respite for weary travellers and camels along the Silk Road. Here, we'll have lunch within the old niches of the Caravanserai. Then we'll continue on to Nain, famed for high-quality carpets and textiles, here we'll visit the Jam'e Mosque, and the beautiful Pirnia House and Ethnography Museum.

*Overnight: Isfahan*

*Accommodation: Kowsar Hotel – or similar*

*Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner*

*Travel Times:*

*Yazd – Meybod: 54 minutes*

*Meybod – Nain: 1 hour 27 minutes*

*Nain – Isfahan: 1 hour 53 minutes*

Day 6: After a comfortable sleep in the Kowsar Hotel, it's time to explore Isfahan, known as 'nisf jahan' or half the world, due to its illustrious history and beauty. We'll start in the majestic Naqsh-e Jahan Square, once used for royal gatherings and polo playing, today it's a UNESCO World Heritage Site, then we're off to Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque, and the trio of beautiful palaces; Ali Qapu, Chehel Sotoun and Hasht Behesht.

*Overnight: Isfahan*

*Accommodation: Kowsar Hotel – or similar*

*Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner*

Day 7: In the morning we'll head off to take in the heady sights and smells of the Bazaar with its many street-food stalls, where you can try delicious local delights. Then we'll move on to the Armenian Quarter and stop at one of its famous cafes before continue on to see the Jam'e Mosque and the 15<sup>th</sup> century Vank Cathedral with its stunning frescos and gilded carvings. In the evening we'll take a walk along the historical bridges Kajou and Sio-Se Pol where locals gather to drink tea, sing folk songs and watch the world go by.

*Overnight: Isfahan*

*Accommodation: Kowsar Hotel – or similar*

*Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner*

Day 8: On day eight we venture into the desert! As a small group we'll drive to Abyaneh for a tour of the historical village, before driving out to the Matin Abad eco desert camp, where you can check out the organic farm, or even ride camels. In the afternoon, take a walk through sand dunes and at night it's a perfect spot for stargazing under the vast desert night sky.

*Overnight: Matin Abad desert camp*

*Accommodation: Matin Abad desert camp*

*Meals: breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner*

*Travel Times:*

*Isfahan – Abyaneh: 2 hours 18 minutes*

*Abyaneh – Matin Abad: 57 minutes*

Day 9: The next day we head off to Kashan, we'll see the beauty of Iranian architecture at the impressive Boroujerdi House and Tabatabaie House. Later we'll visit the ancient Sialk Ziggurt before heading off to another UNESCO World Heritage Site, Fin Garden, where we'll walk among trickling fountains and 500 year old cedar trees. Then we continue driving on to Tehran to check in at our hotel. We spend two full days in the capital to see the sights.

*Overnight: Tehran*

*Accommodation: Azadi Hotel – or similar*

*Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner*

*Travel Times:*

*Matin Abad – Kashan: 57 minutes*

*Kashan – Tehran: 2 hours 50 minutes*

Day 10: In the morning the first place we visit is the magnificent Golestan Palace – a UNESCO World Heritage Centre. We'll also visit the Archeology Museum and Carpet Museum, where you can see first-hand the exquisite

beauty of Persian carpets before taking an evening visit to Tabiat Bridge, to see the stunning night lights and views over the city.

*Overnight: Tehran*

*Accommodation: Azadi Hotel – or similar*

*Meals: breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner*

Day 11: On the second day in Tehran we'll visit the galleries, museums, and gardens of the Sa'ad Abad Palace Complex, a 300 hectare complex built by the Qajar and Pahlavi monarchs. Then we'll make our way to Tarjish Bazaar for some shopping time to pick up souvenirs. Then it's off to explore the cool and green Darband Mountain area, dotted with traditional restaurants, where we'll have dinner amidst an incredibly scenic, outdoor setting of fresh mountains and waterfalls.

*Overnight: Tehran*

*Accommodation: Azadi Hotel – or similar*

*Meals: breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner*

Day 12: Day twelve is spent travelling to Tabriz, on the way we'll stop at the impressive tomb of the Mongol ruler Khan Oljeitu (Soltaniyeh Dome), a UNESCO World Heritage Site and stunning example of Persian architecture. Almost 25m in diameter and 48m high, today it's the world's tallest brick dome, and at the time of construction in the year 1302 it was the tallest building in the entire world. Continue driving to Tabriz.

*Overnight: Tabriz*

*Accommodation: Pars Hotel – or similar*

*Meals: breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner*

*Travel Times:*

*Tehran – Soltaniyeh Dome: 3 hours 20 minutes*

*Soltaniyeh Dome – Tabriz: 3 hours 41 minutes*

Day 13: After a relaxing evening, we'll spend the next day sightseeing and shopping in Tabriz. We'll visit the 15<sup>th</sup> century Blue Mosque decorated with blue tiles and floral motifs, the charming Qajar-era Constitutional House, Azerbaijan Museum and Iron Age Museum. You'll also have time to go to the lake at El-Goli Park, full of quaint restaurants and cafes, before checking out the fabulous Bazaar.

*Overnight: Tabriz*

*Accommodation: Pars Hotel – or similar*

*Meals: breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner*

Day 14: Enjoy breakfast and then we'll take an excursion to the magical troglodyte village of Kandovan. Here we'll spend the day visiting the

sights, ancient caves, and gazing at the incredible volcanic scenery. You'll have a chance to buy some of the best natural honey in the world before returning back to Tabriz. Evening transfer to Tabriz International Airport.

*Travel times:*

*Tabriz – Kandovan: 1 hour*

*Turkish Airways international flights depart after midnight from Tabriz International Airport.*

*Note: Itinerary is subject to change slightly depending on seasons, schedule and opening times.*