

# Iran: Magic Carpet to Persian Splendors

April 5 21, 2020 (arrival/departure Istanbul)

**M**odern Iran is a place that has been much in the news lately. There is far more to the experience of this complex country than the the news of the past four decades and its most recent re-entry on the world stage would indicate. Fundamentaly, a visit there astonsihes and delights for the warm degree of welcome and hospitality that awaits the visitor from the west, and particularly from the United States. Just as experiencing this country today is enlightening and informative, an immersion in traditional Persian culture of the past offers the key to understanding the winds of cultural change and innovation that have swept through this pivotal bridge between the east and the west.



*Isfahan: Shah Mosque viewed from the Maidan (all watercolors by Stephen Harby)*

Our sixteen-night expedition has been crafted by Pasargad Tours (the travel agency of choice for all the best cultural and educational groups) to begin in Tabriz and end in Shiraz, using Istanbul as the gateway, since Turkish Airlines is the sole carrier to offer international flights to both of these destinations. Our itinerary will encompass a wide range of the country's outstanding sites of artistic, archaeological, architectural and cultural significance. Taking a single

internal flight between Tehran and Kerman and then traveling in a circle by land back to Shiraz, we will experience the great landmarks and places of this region, most of which would be on any dedicated traveler's life list of key world sites. Persepolis of the Achaemenid kings Cyrus and Darius; and Isfahan of Shah Abbas were the greatest places on earth in their times. Yazd, Abyaneh and Kashan provide rich offerings of indiginous

construction, mosques, gardens and traditional urban settings. It will be a memorable journey!

An option to join the group in Tehran for a shorter, 12 night trip is possible, eliminating the first four nights of the trip. In the event of oversubscription, preference will be given to those choosng the full itineary.

These are indeed interesting times to be making a visit to Iran, and the visitor, particularly those of us from the US, will be pleasantly surprised by the friendly, hospitable welcome and progressive and youthful character of the population as a whole.

## Detailed Itinerary

DAY 01 (Sun, April 5, 2020): DEPARTURE ISTANBUL

(Turkish Airlines TK 882 9:30 pm booked individually by participants).

DAY 02 (Mon, April 6): ARRIVAL TABRIZ  
START OF SERVICE

Arrival in Tabriz in the early hours of the morning; meet and transfer to hotel (with our room waiting for us, prebooked for April 17); after some rest, visit the Blue Mosque, known in the world as the Turquoise of Islam, and the Azerbaijan Museum, displaying a fine collection of pre-historic and historic artifacts in the area; also visit the Grand Bazaar of Tabriz (a UNESCO World Heritage Site); overnight stay at hotel.



*Above and right top: Mausoleum of Sheikh Safi-eddin Ardebili; Below, left: Arg-e Alishah, 14th century; and Below, right: Mirza Ali Akbar Mosque.*

DAY 03 (Tue, April 7): TABRIZ/  
EXCURSION TO KANDOVAN

Today you will drive by the 13th century Arg-e Alishah, which was originally a magnificent Friday Mosque, but turned into a fortress in the 19th century; also visit the Quran and Calligraphy Museum and the Poets' Tombs (Maghbarat-ol-Shoara; afternoon short excursion to the intriguing troglodyte village of Kandovan, up in the heights of Mt. Sahand, a volcanic mountain.

In Kandovan people have carved their houses in the rocks and still live in them as in ancient times; return to Tabriz for overnight stay at hotel.

DAY 04 (Wed, April 8): TABRIZ-  
ARDABIL

Drive to Ardebil to visit another UNESCO World Heritage Site, the magnificent Mausoleum of Sheikh Safi-eddin Ardebili, a widely revered Sufi philosopher of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, who





Above: 14th century Gonbad-e-Soltaniyeh (Soltaniyeh Dome) near Zanjan; Below: Arg, or Citadel, of Rayen

made Ardebil his home. He was the forefather of the well-known Safavid kings of Iran, and since his death at the age of 83 his mausoleum has become the Mecca of thousands of pilgrims every year; nearby, the attractively brick-vaulted Mirza Ali Akbar Mosque has a blue Kufic-tiled exterior frieze. The Mongol Il-khanid Jame Mosque was once a truly gigantic brick edifice but little remains now; time-permitting visit the attractive covered bazaar of Ardabil; overnight stay at hotel.

#### DAY 05 (Thurs, April 9): ARDABIL-ZANJAN-TEHRAN

Morning drive to Tehran with en route visit to one of the finest achievements of Persian architecture and a UNESCO World Heritage Site -- the magnificent Gonbad-e-Soltaniyeh (Soltaniyeh Dome) near Zanjan, which was built by Sultan Mohammad Khodabandeh (Uljaitu), the 14th century Il-Khanid Ruler of Iran (1304-1330). Among all the magnificent palaces, mosques, and public buildings that were built in the

formerly vast plain of Soltaniyeh, only the tomb of Uljaitu has survived. The monument is remarkable in many ways; its huge dome is about 51 meters high and ranks amongst the largest domes in the world. The stucco-work, the tile-work, and other decorative elements in this monument are unique; continue to Tehran, via Qazvin, for overnight stay at hotel.



Those who have chosen to join the tour only at this point will travel this day to Tehran, and will be met and transferred to the hotel.

#### DAY 06 (Fri, April 10): TEHRAN

Full day of visits to some of Tehran's major museums: these will include Iran's National Archaeological Museum, displaying an authenticated collection of pre-historic and ancient artifacts with pottery dating back to 6-7 millennium B.C.; the Islamic Museum with a unique collection of artifacts, manuscripts, silver and bronze objects and tiles from different post-Islamic periods in Iran, displayed on two floors; Abguineh (Glass & Ceramics) Museum, a valuable collection of pre-Islamic and Islamic glass and ceramics, beautifully displayed and located in an elegant early 20th-century mansion; and the Carpet Museum, with an extensive collection of old Persian carpets and rugs from the major carpet-weaving centers of Iran; overnight stay at hotel.



*Above: Mahan, Shahzadeh Garden, a late 19th century Qajar period garden and house; Below: Zoroastrian Towers of Silence (called a Dakhma, a wide tower with a platform open to the sky), dating back to the 18th century; and Below left, one of the domed chambers in the complex.*

**DAY 07 (Sat, April 11): TEHRAN-KERMAN**

Further visits in Tehran to include the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Golestan Palace/Museum Complex, built by Fath-Ali Shah of the Qajar Dynasty, dating from the 18th to early 20th century, to visit the Marble Throne Hall, the Ethnographic Museum and the Shams-ol-Emareh (Sun) Palace, with a walk around the garden to enjoy the beautiful tile covered walls and buildings; and the Sa'ad Abad Palace/Museum Complex, built by the Qajar and Pahlavi monarchs and the residence of the former Royal Family of

Iran, to see the White and Green Palaces; transfer to domestic airport for early evening flight to Kerman; overnight stay at hotel.

**DAY 08 (Sun, April 12): KERMAN/ EXCURSION RAYEN & MAHAN**

Morning drive to the village of Rayen, to visit the Arg, or Citadel, of Rayen, a miniature version of the Arg-e-Bam, with all the architectural features of a desert citadel; on the return journey stop in Mahan to visit one of the nine Persian Gardens listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site -- the Shahzadeh Garden,

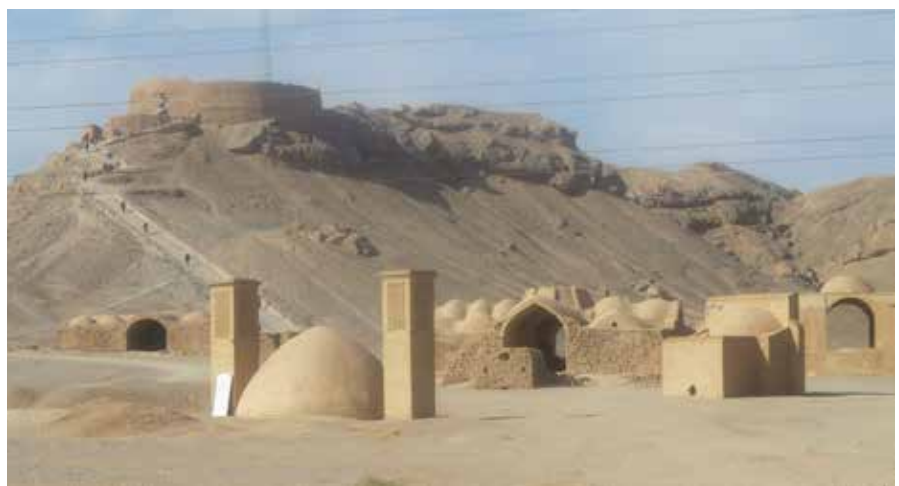
a late 19<sup>th</sup> century Qajar period garden/ house; and the magnificent blue-tiled Mausoleum of Shah Nematollah-e-Vali, the great 14<sup>th</sup> century Sufi Leader; return to Kerman for overnight stay at hotel.

**DAY 09 (Mon, April 13): KERMAN-YAZD**

Half day visits in Kerman to include the Ganj-Ali-Khan Complex (17<sup>th</sup> century Safavid period bathhouse/ethnographic museum, bazaar, and caravanserai), the Hammam-e-Vakil, another 18<sup>th</sup> century bathhouse turned into a traditional teahouse/restaurant, and the 14<sup>th</sup> century Friday Mosque; afternoon drive to Yazd, en route, visit the Zein-ed-Din Caravanserai, dating from the Safavid period; continue to Yazd for overnight stay at hotel.

**DAY 10 (Tues, April 14): YAZD**

Full day sightseeing in the newly listed UNESCO World Heritage Site, the Historic City of Yazd and the center for Iran's small Zoroastrian community. On this day you will visit the active Zoroastrian Fire Temple, the fire of which has been burning for about 1500 years; and one of the two Zoroastrian abandoned Towers of Silence (called a Dakhma, a wide tower with a platform open to the sky), dating back to the





Other notable Islamic monuments in the old Fahadan area of Yazd are the Seljuk shrine dedicated to the Twelve Shi'ite Imams (currently under restoration); and Ziaieyeh Theological School, known as Zendan-e-Eskander or Alexander's Prison. There are also many beautiful old houses in Yazd, among them another Persian Garden listed as World Heritage Site, the Dowlat-Abad Garden, with an 18th century feudal hexagonal house and the highest 'badguir' (wind-catcher) in Iran; overnight stay at hotel.



DAY 11 (Wed, April 15): YAZD-MEYBOD-NA'IN-ISFAHAN

18th century, where until some 50-60 years ago corpses were left on the platform to be picked clean by vultures, a process which only took a few hours. Among Yazd's Islamic sites are the Friday Mosque (1324 A.D.) with the highest portal and minarets in Iran, and the Mirchachmagh Maidan and Mosque.

Drive to Isfahan, en route stop over first in Meybod, a small desert town with several very interesting monuments of desert/mud architecture and a caravanserai; continue to the village of Mohamadiye, to see the traditional workshops weaving the camel cloaks worn by the Moslem

clergy in Iran; on to Na'in, another charming desert town, half way between Yazd and Isfahan, to visit the 10<sup>th</sup> century Friday Mosque, and the 17<sup>th</sup> century Pirnia House/ Ethnographic Museum, with a walk through the old part of town; overnight stay at Abbasi Hotel.

*Top right: Isfahan, Friday Mosque; Top left and below: Isfahan, Shah Mosque*



#### DAY 12 (Thurs, April 16): ISFAHAN

Full day tour of the beautiful city of Isfahan, the 17th century capital of the Safavids, referred to as Nesf-e-Jahan (Half of the World) in Safavid sources, to visit the famous bridges of Shahrestan, Khajou, and Sio-se-pol, the Armenian Quarter with several churches, including the important Cathedral of Vank; in the afternoon visit one of the world's grandest squares and a UNESCO World Heritage Site -- the Maidan-e-Naghsh-e-Jahan, with several sites (the Ali-Qapu Palace with its enchanting music rooms and balcony overlooking the Maidan, from where the Safavid Kings watched polo games, and two of Islamic world's greatest mosques – the Sheikh Lotfollah and the Imam – with magnificent architecture and tilework), finishing with a visit to the Qeisarieh Bazaar with hundreds of shops and workshops, displaying the arts and handicrafts for which Isfahan is world-famous; overnight stay at hotel.

#### DAY 13 (Fri, April 17): ISFAHAN

Another full day of sightseeing in Isfahan to include visit to another UNESCO World Heritage Site, the magnificent Friday Mosque (Masjed-e-Jameh), with the famous Uljaitu Mihrab (Prayer Niche) of the Il-Khanid period; the Friday Mosque is considered a museum of a thousand years of Persian religious architecture and is truly one of the world's greatest mosques. From here drive to the Chehel Sotun Palace, built by Shah Abbas II in the 17th century; its twenty wooden columns reflected in the surface of the pool give rise to its name 'The Palace of Forty Columns'. Final stop of the day is at the Hasht Behesht pavilion built in 1670 by Shah Solayman and known as the Pavilion of Eight Paradises or the Palace of Nightingales. This small



but intricate building is set amongst tree-lined alleys, a reflecting pool and water rills; overnight stay at hotel.

#### DAY 14 (Sat, April 18): ISFAHAN-PASARGADAE-SHIRAZ

Morning drive to Shiraz with en route visit to Pasargadae (UNESCO World Heritage Site), pre-dating Persepolis, the first dynastic capital of the Achaemenian Empire, founded by Cyrus the Great in the sixth century B.C, to see the simple but impressive tomb of Cyrus, and the remains of his palaces, all located in the vast plain of Dasht-e-Morghab; continue to Shiraz for overnight stay at hotel.



Top: Tomb of Darius, near Persepolis; Above: Persepolis

#### DAY 15 (Sun, April 19): SHIRAZ/ EXCURSION TO PERSEPOLIS & NAGHSH-E-ROSTAM

Full day excursion to the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Persepolis, one of the most important sites of the Ancient World, the ceremonial capital of the Achaemenid kings with remains of the palaces of Darius the Great, Xerxes and Artaxerxes, and its famous bas-reliefs, depicting kings and courtiers and gift-bearing representatives of tributary nations of the Persian Empire; also visit Naghsh-e-Rostam to see Ka'be-Zardosht (fire temple/ sanctuary), and Royal Tombs (also Achaemenid); plus seven magnificent Sassanian rock-reliefs (including Shapur the First's famous victory over Roman Emperor Valerian); return to Shiraz and visit the tomb of Iran's greatest lyric poet Hafez, located in a beautiful garden; overnight stay at hotel.

#### DAY 16 (Mon, April 20): SHIRAZ

Full day of visits in Shiraz to some of the famous gardens of this city of "roses and nightingales", including the Eram Garden, the Pars Museum located in an elegant Zand period building situated in Nazar Garden, with a collection of Zand and Qajar period artifacts and paintings, the Arg-e-Karim Khan (18th-century citadel), the pink tiled 19th-century Nasir-ol-Molk Mosque, the Qajar-period Narenjestan Garden/House; and the Vakil Bazaar leading to Saray-e-Moshir with splendid architecture and shops; overnight stay at hotel.

#### DAY 17 (Tues, May 21): SHIRAZ-ISTANBUL

Midnight transfer to airport for departure flight to Istanbul by Turkish Airlines, TK 885, departing at 3:00 am and arriving Istanbul at 5:35 am. This flight is to be booked by individual participants.

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For Pricing and Registration Information

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