

Iran: Magic Carpet to Persian Splendors

May 5 to 21, 2022 (arrival/departure)

Modern 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 news of the past four decades and its most recent re-entry on the world stage would indicate. Fundamentally, a visit there astounds 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 there is an option to also use Qatar Airways when departing Shiraz). 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

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

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.

An option to join the group in Tehran for a shorter, 12 night trip is possible, eliminating the first four nights of the trip.

Detailed Itinerary

DAY 01 (Thurs, May 5, 2022):
DEPARTURE ISTANBUL

Getting yourselves to Istanbul, you will join the group for Turkish Airlines TK 882 9:45 pm booked individually by participants.

DAY 02 (Fri. May 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 May 5); 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 (Sat May 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 (Sun. May 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 14th century, who made Ardebil his home. He was the forefather of the well-known Safavid kings of Iran, and since his death at the





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

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.

in the world. The stucco-work, the tile-work, and other decorative elements in this monument are unique. From here, 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 05 (Mon. May 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



DAY 06 (Tues. May 10): TEHRAN

Full day of visits to some of Tehran's major museums: these will include Iran's National Archaeological Museum, displaying a 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 with an installation designed by Austrian architect Hans Hollein; and the Carpet Museum, with an extensive collection of old Persian carpets and rugs from the major carpet-weaving centers of Iran. Conclude the day with a visit to Tabiat (nature) Bridge, a 2010 competition winning design by a then 26 year old woman architect, Leila Araghian. The longest pedestrian bridge in Iran spans a verdant valley and connects two parks. 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

DAY 07 (Wed. May 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 (Thurs. May 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 19th century Qajar period garden/house; and the magnificent blue-

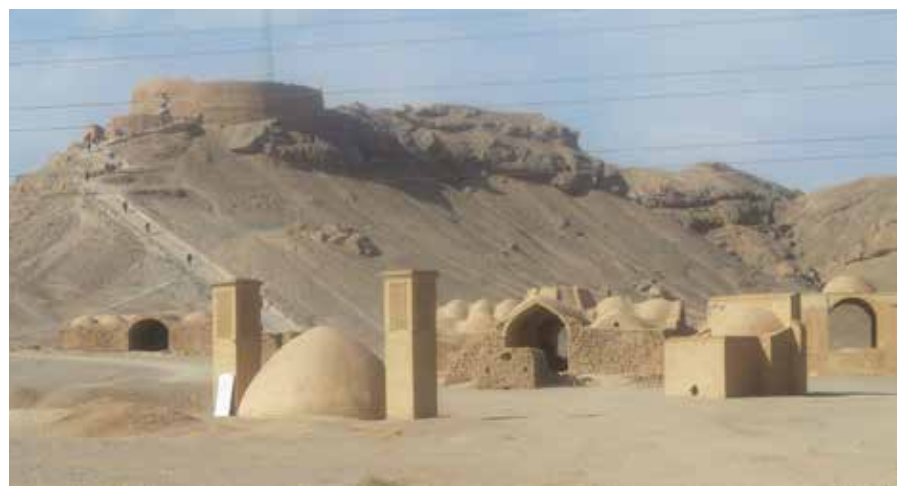
tilled Mausoleum of Shah Nematollah-e-Vali, the great 14th century Sufi Leader;. Return to Kerman for overnight stay at hotel.

DAY 09 (Fri. May 13): KERMAN-YAZD

Half day visits in Kerman to include the Ganj-Ali-Khan Complex (17th century Safavid period bathhouse/ethnographic museum, bazaar, and caravanserai), the Hammam-e-Vakil, another 18th century bathhouse turned into a traditional teahouse/restaurant, and the 14th 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 (Sat. May 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 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. 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 Alexandar'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 (Sun. May 15): YAZD-MEYBOD-NA'IN-ISFAHAN

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 10th century Friday Mosque, and the 17th century Pirnia House/ Ethnographic Museum, with a walk through the old part of town; overnight stay at Abbasi Hotel.



DAY 12 (Mon. May 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



Top right: Isfahan, Friday Mosque; Top left and above: Isfahan, Shah Mosque

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 (Tues. May 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 (Wed. May 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.

DAY 15 (Thurs. May 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. It was 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



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

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 (Fri. May 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 (Sat. May 21): SHIRAZ-ISTANBUL

Midnight transfer to the airport for departure flight to Istanbul by Turkish Airlines, TK 885, departing at 3:35 am and arriving Istanbul at 5:35 am. Alternatively, Qatar Airways QR 477 operates to Doha at 5:55 am. These flights are to be booked by individual participants.