



## Itinerary Open-Jaw Persia 2 with Turkish airline (13 Days)

### Day 1: Arrive in Tabriz, Visit Tabriz & Kandovan village (56 k.m. nonstop drive, approx. 1 hour and 30 mins)

Sightseeing: bazaar, Blue Mosque, Azerbaijan Museum, Iron Age Museum, El Goli, Kandovan village

Upon your pre-dawn arrival at Tabriz airport, our representative, carrying our logo show card (transfer information), will meet and transfer you to your hotel. You will have time to rest and relax before our morning tour of Tabriz begins. Iranian Azerbaijanis are one of the most cultured and bravest races in Iran, the Azeris. And Tabriz is the most populated city in Azerbaijan, one of the historical capitals of Iran and the present capital of East Azerbaijan. The city is famous for its handicrafts, including hand-woven rugs and jewelry. Local confectionery, chocolate, dried nuts and traditional Tabrizi food are recognized throughout Iran as some of the best. Tabriz contains many historical monuments, representing Iran's architectural transition throughout its deep history. Most of Tabriz's preserved historic sites, which we will visit, belong to Ilkhanid, Safavid and Qajar.

We leave the hotel at 9 for a visit to the exotic bazaar which is one of the oldest bazaars in the Middle East and the largest covered traditional bazaar in the world. It was inscribed as World Heritage Site by UNESCO in July 2010.

Then we pay a visit to the Blue Mosque, a famous historic mosque built in 1465 upon the order of Jahan Shah, the ruler of Kara Koyunludynasty which made Tabriz the capital of his Kingdom. In close proximity of the mosque, we will visit the Azerbaijan Museum; the major archaeological and historical museum in Tabriz. The museum consists of three major halls, a side yard, office rooms and a library. It mostly contains objects discovered from excavations in Iranian Azerbaijan, also some artworks and sculptures of artists. Then we walk to the Iron Age Museum; an archaeological site in the north, northeast and northwest of the Blue Mosque including cemeteries and traces of Iron Age pottery.

Afterwards we will stop by El Goli; a large park in Tabriz that has a square artificial lake surrounded by sidewalks in four sides. There is also a building in the middle of the lake, with traditional architecture of Iranian Azerbaijan. In the South of the lake there is a hill covered by trees. Two beautiful stairways connect the sidewalks to the top of the hill. At the top of the hill there is a building with modern architecture (Pars hotel building).

In the evening, we will visit the beautiful village of Kandovan; a village in Sahand Rural District, in East Azerbaijan Province. This village exemplifies manmade cliff dwellings which are still inhabited.



The homes, excavated inside volcanic rocks, are locally called "Karaan". Karaans were cut into the Lahars (volcanic mudflow or debris flow) of Mount Sahand. Attention: The priority in sightseeing may be changed due to the time of your arrival, preference of your guide and also official and unofficial holidays of some museums. Overnight in Tabriz.

**Day 2: Drive to Julfa, visit Julfa, fly to Mashhad (132 k.m. nonstop drive, approx. 2 hour and 10 mins - Tabriz to Mashhad flight time approx. 2 hour)**

Sightseeing: Julfa city, the ancient St. Stepanos Monastery

Today's excursion includes a visit to the historical city of Julfa bordering upon Armenia in the northeast, and Iran in the south. It is located near the Aras River and the fascinating forests of Arasbaran. Julfa is the stronghold of the Armenians who possess a rich and unique culture of their own. We will have the opportunity to visit the unique flora and fauna of the region and the ancient St. Stepanos Monastery; an Armenian monastery about 15 km northwest of Julfa city, East Azarbaijan Province. It is situated in a deep canyon along the Aras River on the Iranian side of the border between Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic and Iran. It was built in the 9th century and rebuilt in the Safavid era after several earthquakes damaged it. In the evening, we will take the flight to Mashhad. Stay overnight in Mashhad.

**Day 3: excursion to Nishapur, visit Nishapur & Shadyakh (129 k.m. nonstop drive approx. 2 hour)**

Sightseeing: the tombs of Khayyam & Attar, Shadyakh, Museum of Nishapur

Nishapur is a city in the Khorasan Province, in northeastern Iran, situated in a fertile plain at the foot of the Binalud Mountains. The city was founded in the 3rd century by Shapur I as a Sasanid satrapy capital. Nishapur later became the capital of Tahirid dynasty and was reformed by Abdullah Tahir in 830, and was later selected as the capital of Seljuq dynasty by Tughril in 1037. From the Abbasid era to the Mongol invasion of Khwarezmia and Eastern Iran, the city evolved into a significant cultural, commercial, and intellectual center within the Islamic world. What remains of old Nishapur region is a 3500-hectare "Kohandehj" area, south of the current city of Nishapur. We will pay a visit to the tomb of Omar Khayyam, a scholar, mathematician, astronomer, philosopher, and poet. Born in Nishapur, in northeastern Iran, at a young age he moved to Samarkand and obtained his education there. Afterwards he moved to Bukhara and became established as one of the major mathematicians and astronomers of the Islamic Golden Age. He also wrote numerous treatises on mechanics, geography, mineralogy, astronomy and music.



We will also visit the tomb of Attar, a Persian mystic poet and theoretician of Sufism, from Nishapur, who had an immense and lasting influence on Persian Poetry and Sufism. Then we will go to visit Shadyakh, one of the main Palaces, Gardens and Great Neighborhoods of old Nishapur that was established by Abdullah ibn Tahir al-Khurasani in the 9th century AD, becoming more important and populated after that. Some notable people like Attar lived there. Attar's tomb is now in that area. This palace was perhaps completely ruined in 13th century AD. Archaeological excavations began in 2000 there and continued for around 2 years. Buildings (possibly a palace), skeleton, equipment and other items were found there. Now Shadyakh is a national Iranian monument, with a registration number of 10910. Our day will conclude with a visit to the Museum of Nishapur. We stay overnight in Mashhad.

#### **Day 4: Visit Mashhad, move to Tehran by train (900 k.m. train time around 12 hour)**

Sightseeing: the holy shrine of Imam Reza, Astan Quds Razavi Museum

Mashhad is the second most populous city in Iran, located in the northeast of the country, close to the borders of Turkmenistan and Afghanistan. The city is most famous and revered for housing the tomb of Imam Reza, the eighth Shia Imam. Every year, millions of pilgrims visit the Imam Reza shrine and pay their tributes to Imam Reza. The city is the hometown of some of the most significant Iranian literary figures such as Ferdowsi, the Iranian poet of Shahnameh, and Mehdi Akhavan-Sales, the famous contemporary poet.

Today we will visit the holy shrine of Imam Reza, a complex which contains the mausoleum of Imam Reza, the eighth Imam of Twelver Shiites. It is the largest mosque in the world by dimension and the second largest by capacity. Also contained within the complex are the Goharshad Mosque, a museum, a library, four seminaries, a cemetery, the Razavi University of Islamic Sciences, a dining hall for pilgrims, vast prayer halls, and other buildings. The complex is one of the tourism centers in Iran. The shrine itself covers an area of 267,079m<sup>2</sup> while the seven courtyards which surround it cover an area of 331,578m<sup>2</sup>.

Then we will pay a visit to the Astan Quds Razavi Central Museum, a major museum complex inaugurated in 1964. Its collections contain Islamic art and historical artifacts; the Museum of Quran and Precious Objects, the Museum of Carpets, the Museum of Armaments, the Museum of Coins and Medals, the Museum of Fine Arts, and so on. We will take the train to Tehran in the afternoon. Overnight in Train. (Ten-hour train trip)



## Day 5: Arrive in Tehran train station, visit Tehran

Sightseeing: The National Museum of Iran, Golestan Palace, Bazaar, National Jewelry Museum

We get up early morning and begin the day with a trip to the National Museum of Iran; an institution formed of two complexes; the Museum of Ancient Iran which was opened in 1937, and the Museum of the Islamic Era which was opened in 1972. It hosts historical monuments dating back through preserved ancient and medieval Iranian antiquities, including pottery vessels, metal objects, textile remains, and some rare books and coins. We will see the “evolution of mankind” through the marvelous display of historic relics.

Next on the list is visiting the Golestan Palace, the former royal Qajar complex in Iran's capital city, Tehran. It is one of the oldest historic monuments of world heritage status belonging to a group of royal buildings that were once enclosed within the mud-thatched walls of Tehran Arg (Citadel of Tehran). It consists of gardens, royal buildings, and collections of Iranian crafts and European presents from the 18th and 19th centuries.

Then we go for a walk through bazaar. Bazaar, in Iran, is the economic life of the country. Moreover, social relations are formed here and a fairly wide range of people get the chance to socialize more. It is also a logical place for political parties to rule their own policies. Soon after we go to have lunch.

Our Tehran excursion will end at the priceless National Jewelry Museum where we will visit a world of jewels, one of which includes one of the two greatest diamonds; Darya-e-Noor (sea of light). Stay overnight in Tehran.

## Day 6: Visit Tehran

Sightseeing: Carpet Museum, Sa'ad Abad Complex, Reza Abbasi Museum, Milad Tower, Nature Bridge (by choice, at an extra cost)

To avoid heavy traffic, taking the subway is the best way to visit Tehran. We take the subway and charter taxis so that we make most of the day and visit as many sites as possible. As a result, you'll have a much better chance to get more acquainted with Iranian people.



We leave the hotel at 9:30 for a trip to the Carpet Museum which houses more than 100 spectacular pieces from all over Iran. Here we will get a chance to see a variety of Persian hand-woven carpets and rugs. We will also be given an insight into the history of these carpets.

Then we pay a visit to Sa'ad Abad Complex with an immense area of 1,100,000 square meters and 18 magnificent historical palaces two of which we will visit. The complex was first built and inhabited by Qajar monarchs in the 19th century. After an expansion of the compounds, Reza Shah of the Pahlavi Dynasty lived there in the 1920s, and his son, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, moved there in the 1970s. After the 1979 Revolution, the complex became a museum. It will undoubtedly leave a lasting impression on us. Soon after we go to have lunch; a tasty Iranian dish in a traditional restaurant.

Afterwards we stop by the Reza Abbasi Museum located in Seyed Khandan. The museum was named after Reza Abbasi; one of the artists in the Safavid period. It is home to a unique collection of Persian art dating back to the second millennium BC, from both the pre-Islamic and Islamic eras.

Finally we make a visit to Milad Tower; the sixth-tallest tower in the world standing at 435 meters from the base to the tip of the antenna (if it is open). At night we can take a tour of the Nature Bridge by choice (at an extra cost). It is the largest pedestrian overpass built in Iran. The 270-metre (890 ft.) bridge connects two public parks--Taleghani Park and Abo-Atash Park—by spanning Shahid Modarres Avenue, one of the main highways in northern Tehran. Stay overnight in Tehran.

**Day 7: Drive to Isfahan, visit Kashan and Abyaneh on the way (450 k.m. nonstop drive approx. 5 hour and 10 mins)**

Sightseeing: historic houses of Borujerdiha and Tabatabaeiha, Abyaneh

Today we leave Tehran for Isfahan early morning. On the way, first we will stop in Kashan and pay a visit to the historic houses of Borujerdiha and Tabatabaeiha and get acquainted with the previous century's architecture, the Qajar era. The second place we will stop at on the way is the UNESCO recognized village of Abyaneh in Barzrud Rural District, located at the foot of Mount Karkas and in the vicinity of desert. On top of the village sits the ruins of a Sasanid era fort. The dialect of the



people of Abyaneh has preserved some characteristics of the Middle Persian language, the language of the Sassanian Persia. We appreciate the serenity of this quaint village with its splendid archaeology and meet the dwellers who speak, live and dress in the original Persian style. Afterwards we will continue all the way to Isfahan and check into the hotel. We stay overnight in Isfahan.

### **Day 8: Visit Isfahan**

Sightseeing: Jame' Mosque, Menar Jonban, Vank Cathedral, Si-o-seh pol

Isfahan, the legendary city which never fails to enchant its visitors, is the pearl of traditional Islamic archaeology. This city is revived by the works of contemporary artists. Isfahan prides itself in having fascinating historical garden palaces. Legend has it that the city was founded at the time of Tahmoures and because of its glories has been entitled "Half the World". Our full-day tour of Isfahan begins with a visit to Isfahan's Jame' Mosque displaying several centuries of historical Islamic evolution. This mosque is a gallery of Islamic architecture in which the progress of architecture from the outset of Islam till recent times is evident. Then we will visit the MenarJonban, the tomb of a Sufi with its shaking minarets and some historical bridges. Afterwards, we will visit Vank Cathedral which is one of the most beautiful Armenian churches in the world and will undoubtedly capture the attention of every Christian. Our day will conclude with a visit to Allahverdi Khan Bridge popularly known as Si-o-seh pol; the bridge of thirty-three spans. It is one of the most famous examples of Safavid bridge design and the longest bridge on the Zayandeh River with the total length of 297.76 meters. stay overnight in Isfahan

### **Day 9: Visit Isfahan, drive to Yazd, visit Varzaneh & Nain on the way (325 k.m. nonstop drive approx. 4 hour)**

Sightseeing: Chehel Sotoun, Imam Square, Ali Qapu, Imam Mosque, Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque, Jame Mosque in Varzaneh, abaya-weaving workshop in Nain

Our tour today includes a visit to Chehel Sotoun Palace; a pavilion in the middle of a park at the far end of a long pool built by Shah Abbas II to be used for his entertainment and receptions. the name meaning "forty columns" in Persian, was inspired by the twenty slender wooden columns supporting the entrance pavilion appeared to be forty reflected in the water of the fountain, the famed Imam Square (Naqsh-e-Jahan); a huge square second in the world to Beijing's Tiananmen Square, and Ali Qapu Palace; The name coming from Persian "Ālī" (meaning "imperial" or "great"), and Azerbaijani "Qāpū" (meaning "gate"), was given to this place as it was right at the entrance to the Safavid palaces which stretched from the Naqsh e Jahan Square to the Chahar



Baq Boulevard. Finally we tour the Imam Mosque and Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque in Isfahan and enjoy their architectural marvels. In the afternoon, we leave Isfahan for Yazd (around 300 kms). On the way, first we will visit Varzaneh which is famous regionally and all over the world for its spectacular desert having the highest sandy dunes. Unique to Varzaneh, are the local women's costumes. Contrary to the rest of Iran, women typically wear white chadors, rather than black ones. Then we drive to the beautiful city of Nain which is one of the best places in the entire world to see the traditional water system of 'qanat' functioning. Some of the most outstanding monuments in Nain include the Jame Mosque, the Pre-Islamic Narenj Castle, and the Old Bazaar. In the end, we continue all the way to Yazd and check into the hotel. Stay overnight in Yazd.

#### **Day 10: Visit Yazd**

Sightseeing: Jame Mosque, Old City, Alexander's Prison, Dowlatabad Garden, Water Museum, confectionery and handicraft workshops

Yazd, the oldest adobe city in the world which is surrounded by the 4000m summit of Shirkooh and two majestic deserts of Iran, Dasht-e-Kavir and Kavir-e-Loot. This ancient city is furnished with mosques of stunning beauty. The co-existence of the splendid fire temples and the holy sites of different religions astonish every visitor.

Today's tour includes visiting the Jame Mosque, the old city of Yazd, the 15th-century domed school known as Alexander's Prison. Whether the deep well in the middle of its courtyard was in fact built by Alexander the Great and used as a dungeon seems doubtful, no matter what the guide says. The building is worth a look for the small display on the old city of Yazd, but mostly the fee covers access to a warren of craft workshops.

Then we continue with Dowlatabad Garden; an authentic Iranian garden that annually attracts thousands of domestic and foreign tourists. This is a complex built according to the original Iranian architectural style and consists of a large garden and some buildings.

Afterwards we head for Yazd Water Museum. This 124- year-old Museum displays the tools and techniques used for the past 4000 years in Iran in creating underground waterways (called Qanats) and connecting them to the city and field locations for agricultural and other uses. Yazd water museum was set up in 2000 in the wake of the first international conference on qanat in Yazd. The museum building has once been a merchant's house built in 1929. Two qanats are running beneath the museum at different levels, which are reachable through a special stairway called



Payab. This museum has put on display a variety of water objects from qanat to water ownership documents. The museum is one of the best tourist destinations in Yazd, which receive hundreds of visitors every day. Finally we pay a visit to confectionary and handicraft workshops. Stay overnight in Yazd.

### **Day 11: Drive to Shiraz, visit Zeinodin, Abarkuh & Pasargadae on the way (440 k.m. nonstop drive approx. 5 hour and 30 mins)**

Sightseeing: Zeinoddin Caravanserai, Abarkuh (the ancient living cypress tree, Icehouse), Pasargadae

Today we hit the road for Shiraz. On the way to Shiraz, we will have a short stop at Zeinoddin Caravanserai dating back to the 16th century. It is one of the inns built with circular towers during the reign of Shah Abbas I to provide facilities to travelers. The caravanserai is situated on the ancient Silk Road which was, until 1500, the main trade route between Europe and Asia. Then we head for Abarkuh, a historical city located at an altitude of 1510 meters. We will visit an ancient living cypress tree (4500 years old) in Abarkuh.

Old trees in any region are the symbol of archaism and tell the truth that appropriate weather and nice conditions are quite helpful to lead a long life.

Abarkuh Icehouse is the next attraction to which we will pay a visit.

The next place we stop at on the way is Pasargadae. We will see the most important and majestic monuments there. The tomb of Cyrus the Great, the great founder of the Achaemenid Empire (500 years BC), is the oldest historical monument there. The wonderful architecture of his tomb and the huge fertile land over there inspires the visitors. This archeological environment has been the worshiping place for the followers of several religions. Finally we continue all the way to Shiraz and check into the hotel. Stay overnight in Shiraz.

### **Day 12: Visit Shiraz**

Sightseeing: Karim Khan Palace, Vakil Mosque, Vakil Bazaar, SarayeMoshir, Nasir Almolk Mosque, the tombs of Hafez and Saadi, Ali-Ebn-e-Hamzeh, Jahan Nama Garden, Eram Garden, and the tomb of Khajoy-e-Kermani

Shiraz has a reputation for being an enlightened city that has been at the cultural heartland of Iran for more than 2,000 years. The city is crowned as the heartland of Persian culture, and this city of sophistication will never fail to conjure up images of roses and nightingales, gardens and poetry. Early in the morning, relish in the highlights of Shiraz when it was the capital of Iran during the Zand Dynasty. Be inspired by the glorious Karim Khan Palace, the splendid Vakil



Mosque, Vakil Bazaar and Saraye Moshir with its splendid architecture and interesting ethnic souvenir shops, and the Nasir Almolk Mosque. Next, we will stop for a mouth-watering Iranian lunch at one of the traditional restaurants in Shiraz. This gorgeous city is home to famous poets such as Hafez and Saadi, and historical sites from different eras dating back to 6,000 years ago can be found. Hafez is one of the great poets who impressed everyone with his mastery. His poems give us a special feeling and the peace in his tomb is really outstanding. Saadi is a poet, philosopher and mystic who is known as the father of tourism. He travelled to different countries and cities about seven centuries ago. Then he collected all his experiences in verse and rhyme prose in two books named Boustan and Golestan. These two books give you lots of inspiration and information. We will get a chance to pay homage to the tombs of these great poets. In the evening, we will visit Ali-Ebn-e-Hamzeh and marvel at its beauties. We will take a stroll through the JahanNama Garden and witness its tall and proud cedars. Finally we will visit the Eram Garden and the tomb of Khajoy-e-Kermani from where the perspective of the mysterious city of Shiraz will remain in our mind. Overnight in Shiraz.

**Day 13: An excursion to Persepolis & Necropolis, visit Shiraz (the ancient historical-cultural heritage of Sang-e-sia District), transfer to the airport and depart from Iran (60 k.m. nonstop drive approx. 1 hour and 10 mins)**

Sightseeing: Persepolis, Necropolis, Sang-e-sia District, Bibidokhtaran, Mirhadi Mosque, Moshir Mosque, the tomb of Siboooyeh, Niayesh traditional chain hotels

In the morning, we first pay a visit to Persepolis. Founded by Darius I in 518 B.C., Persepolis was the capital of the Achaemenid Empire. It was built on an immense half-artificial, half-natural terrace, where the king of kings created an impressive palace complex inspired by Mesopotamian models. The importance and quality of the monumental ruins make it a unique archaeological site. It seems that Darius planned this impressive complex of palaces not only as the seat of government but also, and primarily, as a showplace and a spectacular center for the receptions and festivals of the Achaemenid kings and their empire such as Nowruz.

The second place we stop by is Necropolis. Opposite Mount Rahmat, ten minutes to the north, proudly stands the Necropolis, the magnificent burial place of Achaemenid kings. The site also provides seven bas-reliefs dating back to Elamite and Sassanid periods.

Then we return to the hotel and get some rest. In the evening, we take a walking tour of the historical and cultural district of Sang-e-sia (black stone), visit the shrine of Bibidokhtaran with its unique architecture which is a sample of the well-known Dome of Soltaniyeh in Zanjan (the third largest dome in the world after the domes of Florence Cathedral and Hagia Sophia, its importance



in the Muslim world may be compared to that of Brunelleschi's cupola for Christian architecture.), visit the historical cypress in Mirhadi Mosque, visit Moshir Mosque and walk past an Armenian church (as a Christian, you may get the chance to pay a visit if you ask for), visit the tomb of Siboooyeh, visit Niayesh traditional chain hotels which include the historical houses of Moayedi, Mostafavi, and Nematollahi. You will see the evolution of the Iranian architecture from 200 years ago to the Qajar era and the present time. You will get to know some elements of the architecture in the interior decoration of the ancient Pahlavi houses such as backyard, courtyard and chambers around the courtyard, guesthouse, pool, shahneshin, orsi, panjdari, and gushvareh. We will make our day by having Shirazi dinner and drink at Delgosha restaurant.

What comes last is our transfer to Shiraz airport and depart from Iran, the land of history, culture, nature, beauty and hospitality, of which you will have fond memories forever.