



## Itinerary Treasure of Persia (12 Days)

### Day 1: Arrive in Tehran, visit Tehran

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

On your pre-dawn arrival at Tehran airport, our representative, carrying our show card (transfer information), will meet you and transfer you to your hotel. You will have time to rest and relax before our morning tour of Tehran begins. 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.

**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.**





## Day 2: Visit Tehran, fly to Shiraz (flight time 1 hour 25 min)

Sightseeing: The National Museum of Iran, Golestan Palace, Bazaar, National Jewelry Museum, Shah-e Cheragh

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's Arg (citadel). 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). Afterwards we will transfer to the airport for the flight to Shiraz. On the way to the hotel, we will pay a visit to Shah-e Cheragh. This is one of the most beautiful shrines in Iran with its beautiful dome, wonderful lighting and Mirror-work. Stay overnight in Shiraz.

## Day 3: Visit Shiraz

Sightseeing : Karim Khan Palace, Vakil Mosque, Vakil Bazaar, Saraye Moshir, Nasir Almolq Mosque, the tombs of Hafez and Saadi, Ali-Ebn-e-Hamzeh, Jahan Nama 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. It had once been the country's capital.





Shiraz 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 Sa'adi, 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 the Eram Garden, a complete sample of Persian garden registered by UNESCO as a world heritage. Then we will visit Ali-Ebn-e-Hamzeh and be prepared to marvel at its beauties. Next, we will take a stroll through the Jahan Nama Garden and witness its tall and proud cedars. Finally we will visit the tomb of Khajoy-e-Kermani from where the perspective of the mysterious city of Shiraz will remain in our mind. Stay overnight in Shiraz.

**Day 4: An excursion to Persepolis & Necropolis, visit Shiraz (the ancient historical-cultural heritage of Sang-e-sia District) (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 Moayedj, 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. Stay overnight in Shiraz.

**Day 5: Drive to Abarkuh, visit Pasargadae on the way (288 k.m. nonstop drive approx. 3 hour and 50 mins)**

Sightseeing : Pasargadae, Abarkuh (the ancient living cypress tree, Icehouse, Gonbad-e Aali, Nizamiyeh School)

Today we leave Shiraz for Abarkuh in the morning. On the way, we will stop by Pasargadae which was the capital of the Achaemenid Empire in ancient Persia under Cyrus the Great who had issued its construction (559–530 BC). We will visit the most majestic monuments there of which the tomb of Cyrus the Great, the great founder of the Achaemenid Empire, is the oldest. The wonderful architecture of the tomb and the huge fertile land over there inspire the visitors. It was the worshiping place for the followers of several religions and is today an archaeological site and one of Iran's UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Afterwards we continue all the way to 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. Icehouses are buildings used to store ice throughout the year, commonly used prior to the invention of the refrigerator. Some were underground chambers, usually man-made, close to natural sources of winter ice such as freshwater lakes, but many were buildings with various types of insulation. Then we will visit Gonbad-e Aali (Aali Dome) which is the oldest structure remained in the town since 11th century, Dailamite period. It is one of the earliest tomb towers in Iran located on top of a hill just at the outskirts of the town. The last place we will stop by in the day is the Nizamiyah School,





which is one of a group of the medieval institutions of higher education established by Khwaja Nizam al-Mulk in the eleventh century in Iran. The name nizamiyyah derives from his name. Founded at the beginning of the Seljuk Empire, these Sunni Islam theological schools are considered to be the model of later Islamic religious schools. stay overnight in Abarkuh.

**Day 6: Drive to Yazd, visit Zeinoddin, Saryazd & Mehriz on the way, visit Yazd (161 k.m. nonstop drive approx. 2 hour and 30 mins )**

Sightseeing : Zeinoddin Caravanserai, Mehriz, Saryazd Castle, Zoroastrian Towers of Silence & Fire Temple, Amir Chakhmaq Complex

In the past, for safety, people used to travel in small or large groups called caravans. Each caravan traversed 6 farsakhs (1 manzel) every day. Farsakh is a historical Iranian unit for measuring distance, equal to 6.24 kilometers. Passing through a manzel, the caravan arrived at a caravansary in which they could stay to rest and relax. Saryazd, Fahraj, and Zeinoddin were the first caravansaries on the roads between Yazd, Shiraz, Kerman, and Sirjan.

Today we hit the road to Yazd. On the way, first we will visit Zeinodin Caravanserai, a Safavid Caravanserai in the heart of desert which is restored in the best way possible and got two awards from UNESCO in 2005 and 2006.

The next place we will stop by is Saryazd Caravanserai which dates back to Seljuk and Safavid era. Another historic place out there is a castle belonging to Sassanid era which is used as a haven in time of war. Then we head for Mehriz, a city located 30 kilometers south of Yazd. Mehriz consists of one central district and five village centers. According to historians, the name belongs to "Mehrnagar" the beloved daughter of Anoushirvan, the Sassanid King. Mehriz was known, during the late Sassanid era (4th century AD), as a natural pleasant area.

Finally we continue all the way to Yazd and check into the hotel. In the afternoon, we will pay a visit to Zoroastrian Towers of Silence; circular raised structures built by Zoroastrians for excarnation (for dead bodies to be exposed to carrion birds), and Fire Temple; the place of worship for Zoroastrians. At night, we will visit Amir Chakhmaq Complex; a prominent structure noted for its symmetrical sunken alcoves. It is a mosque located on a square of the same name. It also contains a caravanserai, a tekyeh (a place where Shiite gather for mourning of Muharram), a bathhouse, a cold water well, and a confectionery. At night, the building is lit up after twilight hours after sun set with orange lighting in the arched alcoves which makes it a spectacle. Stay overnight in Yazd.





## Day 7: Visit Yazd

Sightseeing : Jame Mosque, Old City, Alexander's Prison, Tomb of the 12 Imams, Dowlatabad Garden, Yazd Water Museum, confectionary 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 because of a reference to this apparently dastardly place in a Hafez poem. 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 tool, 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 confectionery and handicraft workshops. Stay overnight in Yazd.

## Day 8: Drive to Isfahan, visit Nain & Varzaneh on the way (325 k.m. nonstop drive approx. 4 hour)

**Sightseeing** : Jame Mosque & abaya-weaving workshop in Nain, Jame Mosque in Varzaneh, safari tour in the desert & Ghoortan citadel .





Today we leave Yazd for Isfahan (around 300 kms) at 8 in the morning. On the way, first we will visit the beautiful city of Nain. More than 3,000 years ago, the Persian learned how to construct aqueducts underground (qanat in Persian) to bring water from the mountains to the plains. In the 1960s this ancient system provided more than 70 percent of the water used in Iran. Nain is one of the best places in all the world to see these qanats functioning. We will stop by an abaya-weaving workshop and Jame Mosque in Nain. The abaya "cloak", sometimes also called an aba, is a simple, loose over-garment covering the whole body except the head, feet, and hands, worn by clergymen and some women in parts of the Muslim World. Jameh Mosque Nain is one of the oldest mosques in Iran, and the town of Nain, close to Yazd is itself one of the oldest in Iran. Dating back to the 9th century, with its interiors dating back to the 11th century (as indicated by its Seljuki brickwork) the heritage listed mosque is actually still in use as a mosque today. The mosque is built in the "Khorasani style", which refers to the first style of architecture appearing after the Muslim Conquest of Persia. The style is notable for its combination of Islamic and pre-Islamic influences. The carvings in the stone and wood are elaborate and beautiful.

In the end, we move to Varzaneh which is famous regionally and all over the world for its spectacular desert having the highest sandy dunes. Here we will pay a visit to Jame Mosque and have a safari tour in Varzaneh desert, have lunch in a local house. Finally we hit the road to Isfahan via visiting Ghoortan citadel of Varzaneh on the way. (On this day, complying with the conditions, the tour guide will do his best to show you into as many sites as possible in each city). Stay overnight in isfahan

### Day 9: Visit Isfahan

Sightseeing : Imam Square, Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque, Imam Mosque, Ali Qapu, Chehel Sotoun, Hasht Behesht, Bazaar

Isfahan, the legendary city which never fails to enchant its visitors, is the pearl of traditional Islamic archeology. 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 or Keykavous and because of its glories has been entitled "Half the World".

Today we start our tour with the famed Imam Square (Naqsh-e-Jahan), a huge square second in the world to Beijing's Tiananmen Square.





Then we pay a visit to the architectural marvels of Sheikh Lotfollah and Imam Mosques, Aliqapu Palace, Chehel Sutoon and Hasht Behesht Palaces, and finally visit one of the most famous bazaars in Iran, where we can purchase the arts & crafts for which Isfahan is so well renowned. Stay overnight in Isfahan.

### **Day 10: Visit Isfahan**

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

Today we continue our tour of the city with a visit to Isfahan's Jame' Mosque which holds in itself the passage of several centuries of historical Islamic evolution. This mosque is a gallery of Islamic architecture in which the progress of the architecture from the outset of Islam till recent times is evident.

Then 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. Afterwards, we will stop by Menar Jonban; the tomb of a Sufi with its shaking minarets and some historical bridges.

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 Zayanderud (the largest river of the Iranian Plateau in central Iran) with the total length of 297.76 meters. You can do free activities in the evening. Stay overnight in Isfahan.

### **Day 11: Drive to Kashan, visit Natanz & Abyaneh (215 k.m. nonstop drive approx. 3 hour)**

Sightseeing : Natanz, Abyaneh

On the way to Kashan, first we will visit Natanz; a city located 70 kilometers (43 mi) south-east of Kashan, whose bracing climate and locally produced fruitare well known in Iran. Various small shrines dot the area, and it is known as the shrine of the Sufi Sheikh Abd al-Samad. The elements in the present complex date from 1304 with subsequent additions and restorations such as the Khaneqah and Muqarnas vault. Afterwards, we continue to 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 Sassanid 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. In the end, we will arrive in Kashan and check into the hotel. We stay overnight in Kashan.







**Day 12: Visit Kashan, transfer to IKA via Qom, depart from Iran (207 k.m. nonstop drive approx. 2 hour and 35 mins)**

Sightseeing : historic houses of Borujerdiha and Tabatabaeiha, Fin Garden, Qom, the shrine of Fatema Masumeh

We begin our tour with a visit to the historic houses of Borujerdiha and Tabatabaeiha in Kashan and get acquainted with the previous century's architecture, the Qajar era. Then we will stop by the Fin Garden; a historical Persian garden containing Kashan's Fin Bath, where Amir Kabir, the Qajarid chancellor, was murdered by an assassin sent by King Nasereddin Shah in 1852. Completed in 1590, the Fin Garden is the oldest extant garden in Iran. Soon after, we will have lunch and leave Kashan for IKA. On the way, we will visit Qom and the holy shrine of Fatema Masumeh. Qom is considered by Shia Muslims to be the second most sacred city in Iran after Mashhad (By choice, we can visit Dasht-e Kavir and Maranjab Carvansary instead). What comes last is our transfer to IKA and depart from Iran, the land of history, culture, nature, beauty and hospitality, of which you will have fond memories forever. (In "Treasure of Persia", we didn't consider it necessary to book a hotel for this night. On request, we can book the hotel at IKA for some hours or a whole night in accordance with your departure time).

