



## *Itinerary, Lion and Sun Tour (13 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. Stay overnight in 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, move to Shiraz by train (13 hours on night train)

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'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.

Afterwards we will transfer to the train station to leave for Shiraz. Overnight on train.

## Day 3: visit Shiraz

Sightseeing: Karim Khan Palace, Vakil Mosque, Vakil Bazaar, Saraye Moshir, Nasir Almolk Mosque, the tombs of Hafez and Saadi, Ali-Ebn-e-Hamzeh, Jahan Nama Garden, Delgosha 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 Ali-Ebn-e-Hamzeh and be prepared to marvel at its beauties. We will take a stroll through the Jahan Nama Garden and witness its tall and proud cedars. Finally we will visit the Delgosha Garden and 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: Drive to Saadat Shahr via visiting Persepolis, Necropolis & Pasargadae (117 k.m. nonstop drive approx. 2 hour)**

Sightseeing: Persepolis, Necropolis & Pasargadae

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. 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. Overnight stay in Aghamir cottage or Ojagh e Seyed Karim.

#### **Day 5: Drive to the Lut Desert & Kaluts, Visit Lake Bakhtegan, Dehmurd, Herat, and Rafsanjan on the way (577 k.m. nonstop drive approx. 7 hour and 30 mins)**

Sightseeing: Lake Bakhtegan, Dehmurd village, Herat and Rafsanjan cities, the Lut Desert, Kaluts





Today we hit the road to The Lut Desert, widely referred to as Dasht-e Lut (literally meaning "Emptiness Plain"). It is a large salt desert located in the provinces of Kerman and Sistan and Baluchestan. It is the world's 27th-largest desert, and was inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List on July 17, 2016. The surface of its sand has been measured at temperatures as high as 70 °C, making it one of the world's driest and hottest places. We will trek through the desert and enjoy its natural beauties. Then we head for the unique yardangs in Shahdad desert. On the way, we will visit Lake Bakhtegan, Dehmurd village, Herat and Rafsanjan which is famous for its pistachio. We stay overnight in a traditional house in DolatAbad village.

#### **Day 6: Drive to Kerman via visiting Mahan & Rayen (97 k.m. nonstop drive approx. 2 hour)**

Sightseeing: The tomb of Shah Ne'mat Ollah-e Vali, Shazdeh Garden, Rayen Castle.

Today we leave for Kerman. Along the way, we make a short stop in Mahan. Mahan is well-known for the tomb of Shah Ne'emmat Ollah-e-Vali, the great Sufi leader, and Shazdeh Garden (Prince's Garden), a historical Persian garden located 6km away from Mahan in Kerman province. The garden is rectangular-shaped, 5.5 hectares in size, enclosed by a wall. It consists of an entrance structure and gate at the lower end and a two-floor residential structure at the upper end. The land between these two is ornamented with water fountains that use the natural incline of the land to power them. The garden is a fine example of Persian gardens that make the most of climate and land formations. Next you will visit the interesting Rayen Castle which is a replica of the Bam Citadel. We stay overnight at a hotel in Kerman.

#### **Day 7: Drive to Zeinoddin or Fahraj, visit Meymand village on the way (299 k.m. nonstop drive approx. 3 hour and 45 mins)**

Sightseeing: Fahraj or Zeinoddin caravanserai, the rocky village of Meymand

Today we hit the road to Zeinoddin or Fahraj. 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. Staying overnight in one of these caravansaries will be an unforgettable experience if there is a vacancy by luck. Zeinoddin Caravanserai is a Safavid Caravanserai in the heart of desert restored in the best way possible. It got two awards from UNESCO in 2005 and 2006.



On the way to Zeinoddin or Fahraj, we will visit the rocky village of Meymand, a very ancient village located near Shahr-e Babak city in Kerman Province. Meymand is believed to be a primary human residence in the Iranian Plateau, dating back to 12,000 years ago. Many of the residents live in the 350 hand-dug houses amid the rocks, some of which have been inhabited for as long as 3,000 years. Stone engravings nearly 10,000 years old are found around the village, and deposits of pottery nearly 6,000 years old attest to the long history of settlement at the village site. On 4 July 2015, the village was added to the UNESCO World Heritage Sites list. Stay overnight in Zeinoddin.

**Day 8: Drive to Yazd, visit Mehriz & Saryazd on the way, visit Yazd (77 k.m. nonstop drive approx. 1 hour and 30 mins )**

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

On the way to Yazd, first we will visit Mehriz which is located 30 kilometers south of the city of Yazd. It consists of one central district and five village centers. According to historians, the name belongs to "Mehrnegar" the beloved daughter of Anoushirvan, the Sassanid King. Mehriz was known, during the late Sassanid era (4th century AD), as a natural pleasant area.

The next place we will stop by on the way is the Saryazd Castle which is a historical castle built during Sassanid Dynasty (the 3th\_ 7th century) in Saryazd village. The castle has been one of the oldest and largest bank safe-deposit boxes in Iran and the world where cereals, money, gold and jewelry were kept during invasions. The castle has nested concentric walls with impregnable high towers that is surrounded by a moat. The moat has a width of 6 meters and a depth of 3 to 4 meters. The castle has two doors that one is a main door and another is a guardian door. The castle has three floors that are made with mud brick.

Then we continue all the way to Yazd. On our way to the hotel, 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 9: Visit Yazd

Sightseeing: Jame Mosque, Old City, Alexander's Prison, 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 10: Drive to Isfahan, visit Meybod, Nain, and Varzaneh on the way (325 k.m. nonstop drive approx. 4 hour)

Sightseeing: Narin Castle in Meybod, abaya-weaving workshop in Nain, Jame Mosque in Varzaneh



Today we leave Yazd for Isfahan (around 300 kms) at 8 in the morning. On the way, first we will visit Maybod; an ancient city that goes back to pre-Islamic arena and is the home to many ancient points of interests. It was the capital of Iran during the Mozaffarid period. Mozaffari kingdom

originated from Meybod where the first king was born. One of the oldest castles in Iran is Narin Castle in Meybod, which dates from the Sasanid. It is one of the most important relics of the province dating back to the period before the advent of Islam to Iran, and has been recorded as one of the national buildings. This ancient castle has been constructed on the top of Galeen hill and overlooks the city.

Then we drive to the beautiful city of Nain. More than 3,000 years ago, the Persian learned how to construct aqueducts underground (qanat in Persian kariz) 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 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.

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 of Varzaneh, go for a walk along the river, have lunch in a local house, and finally hit the road to Isfahan. Stay overnight in Isfahan.

### **Day 11: 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.



We stay overnight in Isfahan.

### **Day 12: Drive to Kashan via Natanz and Abyaneh (215 k.m. nonstop drive approx. 3 hour)**

Sightseeing: Natanz, the tomb of Sheikh Abd al-Samad, the castle of Tarq, 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. Then we will pay a visit to the castle of Tarq; a historic castle from Sassanid era, located in the TarqRud village.

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 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. In the end, we will arrive in Kashan and check into the hotel. Stay overnight in Kashan.

### **Day 13: 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 Carvanserai 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 “Lion and Sun”, 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). Kashan to visit Fin Garden, the historic Casas Tabatabace and Borojerdiha And the Agha Bozorg Mosque. Transfer to IKA and depart Iran the land of warmth and hospitality with fond memories.