



## Itinerary Paradise in Persia Tour (18 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-meter (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.**



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## Day 2: Visit Tehran, fly to Qeshm (flight time approx. 1 hour and 55 mins)

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.

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 Qeshm, the largest Iranian island in the Persian Gulf. Qeshm Island is renowned for its natural beauty, and more recently for its designation as a UNESCO Geopark, which promotes sustainable development alongside preservation of geological heritage. We stay overnight in Qeshm.

## Day 3: Excursion to Hormoz Island

Sightseeing: natural attractions of Hormoz Island

Today we take a ferry to Hormoz, an Iranian island in the Persian Gulf to enjoy visiting its natural beauties. Everywhere we look is potentially interesting. It seems as if all the range of colors and shapes were around the island. We spend a lot of our limited time wondering around awesome caves, crusty rivers and weird rocks.



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Located in the Strait of Hormuz, 8 kilometers (5 mi) off the Iranian coast, Hormoz Island is part of Hormozgan Province with an area of 42 km<sup>2</sup>. It is covered by sedimentary rock and layers of volcanic material on its surface. The highest point of the island is about 186 meters (610 ft.) above sea level. Due to a lack of precipitation, the soil and water are salty. Hormoz Island is considered a unique mineralogical reservoir, due to the incredible variety of rocks and minerals found in this small area. The only monument highlighted in the region, is an old colonial Portuguese fort in serious decay. There is no sign of life around the crumbling walls.

The geological features of the region make this island a unique place in the world and a top destination for anyone into geotourism. Stay overnight in Qeshm.

#### **Day 4: Excursion to Hengam Island, salt caves & Hara forests**

Sightseeing: natural attractions of Hengam Island, salt caves, Hara forests

Today we take a ferry to another Iranian island in the Persian Gulf; Hengam Island. Located south of Qeshm Island, it is 36.6 kilometers (22.7 miles) wide and shaped like a truncated cone. The island is generally calcareous and generally low-lying. The highest point on the island is Nakas Mountain with an altitude of about 106 meters (348 feet). The distance between Hengam Island and Qeshm Island is about 2 kilometers (1.2 miles). The primary economic activity is fishing, as well as some tourism and sightseeing. The main sights of Hengam are the English harbor buildings along with the coal storage, the Portuguese shipwrecks, and aquatic animals such as turtles, dolphins, corals, and sharks

Next, we move on to visit the Salt Cave which is one of the masterpieces of creation in Qeshm Island. Some mountains of Qeshm have turned into salt caves as a result of accumulation of sea water in deep fault and subsequent precipitation of salt. Such caves are not only important as a tourism attraction, but are also significant geological hallmarks. Namakdan salt dome is among natural attractions of Qeshm Island, which attracts a lot of tourists every year. Namakdan salt dome is the only salt dome in Qeshm Island which extends from southern promontory of Salakh anticline up to the northwestern promontory of Basaeedou anticline. Salt caves are located to the south of Namakdan salt dome and are up to 20 meters high and 6 kilometers long. The walls of the caves are formed of colorful salt strips and ferrous ores of hematite, giving it a special beauty. Also Stalagmite, Stalactite and crystallized salts, present in the cave, have added to its beauties. According to recent researches, breathing in the caves maybe useful for curing asthma. Then we will pay a visit to Hara forests (mangrove forests) of Qeshm. Due to a lack of precipitation, the island's soil and water are salty. As a result, specialists have helped cultivar white mangrove or Hara trees to grow in the climate. The Hara tree, *Avicennia marina*, grows to heights of three to





eight meters and has bright green leaves and twigs. The tree is a salt-water plant that is often submerged at high tide. It usually blossoms and bears fruit from mid-July to August, with yellow flowers and a sweet almond-like fruit. Dominated by the species *Avicennia marina*, known locally as the "Hara" tree, the forests represent an important ecological resource. The "Hara Protected Area" is a biosphere reserve where commercial use is restricted to fishing (mainly shrimp), tourist boat trips, and limited mangrove cutting for animal feed. The area is a major habitat for migratory birds in the cold season, and for reptiles, fish, and varieties of arthropoda and bivalves. Green (or hooked) turtles and venomous aquatic snakes are also indigenous to the forests. Bird life includes herons, flamingos, pelicans, and angler eagles. Another important feature of these forests is the appropriate and suitable seabed conditions for the ovulation of fish in the Persian Gulf.

#### **Day 5: Move to Bandar-e Pol by boat, drive to Shiraz, visit Lar & Lamerd on the way**

Sightseeing: Bandar-e Pol, Lar & Lamerdcities

Today we move to Bandar-e Pol, about 60km west of Bandar Abbas, by boat. We can see incredible mangrove forests and colorful dressed women there. Then we drive to Shiraz. On the way, we will visit Lar and Lamerd cities. Lar city was originally called Lad after the person who had first established the city. The city is divided into two areas: new-city and old-city. New-city, which was constructed after the historical earthquake of 1960, now accommodates the main population and is considered to be modern in terms of civil and transport engineering (e.g. dead-ends are very rare). The Old city contains the Bazaar of Qaisariye, a pre-Safavid dynasty creation, that was proposed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site on August 9, 2007. Lamerd was considered to be a major stop along the road to the Persian Gulf around 16th and 17th centuries. Its main industries are based on its rich natural gas sources. Lamerd International Airport opened in 1964, with flights to Tehran, Shiraz, Lar, Lavan and international flights to Kuwait, Qatar and United Arab Emirates. Finally we continue all the way to Shiraz and stay overnight in Shiraz.

#### **Day 6: 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, 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. 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



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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 Eram 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 7: 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 Sibooeyeh, 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 Sibooyeh, 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. Stay overnight in Shiraz.

#### **Day 8: Visit Pooladkaf (122 k.m. nonstop drive approx. 2 hour and 30 mins)**

Sightseeing : Pooladkaf ski resort, Komehr village

We begin the day with an excursion to Pooladkaf, a ski resort in the northwest of Fars province in the middle of Zagros Mountains, 85 km from Shiraz. It opened in 2002. In spite of its low latitude, it receives adequate snow due to its high elevation (usually 2 meters of snow in February). The skiing season starts in December and lasts to the end of March, or in some years April. A gondola lift runs 2100 m and surface lifts support skiers. As of 2012 a hotel restaurant was under construction. It has a small guest house, a restaurant with traditional foods and fast foods, and a coffee shop at the top station of the gondola.

Snowmobiles and ATVs are available along with Segway, bikes, and horses. All resort facilities are open to the public in non-skiing seasons as well. We can stay there a whole day to do the amusing sport of skiing. Then we move towards Komehr, a splendid village located in Margoon region. It is considered a suitable place for a full day trekking in the intact nature of Zagros. In the vicinity of this village lies a scenic strait with rich flora. You will have the chance to get familiar with the life style, economy, culture, beliefs and nourishment of the villagers in Iran. Stay overnight in Pooladkaf.

#### **Day 9: Drive to Padena, stay overnight in Khafr village (220 k.m. nonstop drive approx. 4 hour)**

Sightseeing: natural attractions of Padena & Khafr villages, fanciful landscapes of Zagros Mountains





We get an early start today and head for Padena. About 160 km northwest of Shiraz, there are more than 40 peaks higher than 4000 meters in a region called Padena in the Dena Range and in the Zagros Mountains in general. A mixture of the woods, peaks, snow, rivers, springs and waterfalls, has resulted in the region's pleasant climate, certain attraction, and unique flora and fauna. Padena is a popular tourist resort of outstanding natural beauty for mountain climbers and those who seek solace trekking in nature away from a life of luxury. Then we move to Khafr, a village at the foot of Ghash-e Mastan, the highest peak in Dena Range peaking at 4450 meters. We will enjoy the pleasant climate of the region and the most fanciful landscapes of Zagros Mountains. We stay overnight in Khafr.

**Day 10: Drive to Sar Aqa Seyyed village or Kuhrang, stay overnight (360 k.m. nonstop drive approx. 6 hour)**

Sightseeing: natural attractions of Sar Aqa Seyyed village or Kuhrang

Today we leave for Sar Aqa Seyyed village or Kuhrang County. The village is an extremely rural one, a few centuries old, located in the Zagros Mountain range in Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari Province. An exceptional few number of travelers have ever had the chance to experience this rare unvisited destination. The phenomenal step-like architecture is very similar to that seen in the more popular Masuleh village in the northern Iranian province of Gilan. The culture of this tiny community is very untouched and has maintained its traditional heritage for many years.

Surrounded by marvelously rich and undisturbed natural environment, this tucked away village, in its beautiful tranquility, gives its residence and visitors a true taste of bliss. In Sar Aqa Seyyed village everybody dresses in traditional Bakhtiari clothing and speak Bakhtiari. There are currently no public accommodations in this village; however locals accept guests and visitors to their community with open arms.

Kuhrang is a county in Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari Province in central Iran. It has only one city; Chelgard, but many tourism attractions. We can see Kohrang spring, ice cave, Sheikh-Ali Khan waterfall, and Dimeh spring in there. The people of this county are Bakhtiari and speak Lorish. We stay overnight in Sar Aqa Seyyed or Kuhrang.

**Day 11: Drive to Isfahan, visit Isfahan (235 k.m. nonstop drive approx. 4 hour)**

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





Today we hit the road to Isfahan. Upon our arrival in Isfahan, we have lunch and check into the hotel. In the afternoon, first we will visit 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 Menar Jonban, 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. We stay overnight in Isfahan.

### Day 12: Visit Isfahan

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

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 and because of its glories has been entitled "Half the World". Our full day tour includes 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 and enjoy their architectural marvels. Evening is free at leisure. Stay overnight in Isfahan.

### Day 13: Drive to Kashan, visit Abyaneh on the way (215 k.m. nonstop drive approx. 3 hour)

Sightseeing : Abyaneh village



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Today we head for Kashan. On the way, we will stop by 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. We stay overnight in Kashan.

#### **Day 14: Visit Kashan, drive to Kelardasht (431 k.m. nonstop drive approx. 7 hour)**

Sightseeing: historic houses of Borujerdiha and Tabatabaeiha, Fin Garden

We begin our day with a tour of the city. First, we will pay a visit to the historical 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. Afterwards we will have lunch and leave Kashan for Kelardasht which is a large valley in the Alborz Mountains. We stay overnight there.

#### **Day 15: Visit Kelardasht**

Sightseeing: natural attractions of Kelardasht

Today we will have a great time visiting the natural beauties of Kelardasht and the Caspian Sea. Kelardasht is a city in Chalus County, Mazandaran Province. Originally a farming area, in recent years much of its land was sold in small lots to build numerous villas which are occupied by summer visitors trying to escape the heat of Tehran. Its attractions include Alamkooh Mountain (the second tallest peak in Iran (4850 m)), Abbasabad Road, and Valasht Lake. Picnicking and mountain climbing in the area surrounding Rud-Barak are also popular, as well as in the Abbasabad Forest nearby. The majority of the inhabitants speak Gilaki, but a few migrants speak Kurdish. Stay overnight in Kelardasht.

#### **Day 16: Drive to Polur, visit Damavand (241 k.m. nonstop drive approx. 4 hour and 45 mins)**

Sightseeing: natural attractions of Polur village, Damavand's landscapes. Today we hit the road to Polur, a small village located in Iran's rocky Mazandaran Province, located on Road 77 (Haraz



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Road), the main route from Tehran to the Caspian Sea coast. It is well known for being a popular base to climb Mount Damavand in the Lar National Park, part of the Central Alborz mountain range. Mount Damavand, a potentially active volcano, is the highest peak in Iran and the Middle East, and the highest volcano in Asia. It is in the middle of the Alborz range near the southern coast of the Caspian Sea. It is the 12th most prominent peak in the world, and the second most prominent in Asia after Mount Everest. The starting point for those setting off to scale Mount Damavand, Polur village has a great view of Mount Damavand. Hence during our visit to the village, we will enjoy the most fanciful landscapes of Mount Damavand and take nice pictures of the neighboring villages.

#### **Day 17: Trek in Damavand's hillsides, drive to Tehran (88 k.m. nonstop drive approx. 2 hour)**

Sightseeing: Damavand's hillsides

In the morning, we go trekking in Damavand's hillsides and enjoy the natural beauties of the area with a cool climate. In the afternoon, we hit the road to Tehran and check into the hotel.

#### **Day 18: Visit remaining sites of Tehran, transfer to IKA, and depart from Iran**

Sightseeing: remaining sites of Tehran

Today we will visit the remaining sites of Tehran. Finally we 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 "Paradise in 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).

