



Itinerary Persian Gulf Tour (12 Days)

Day 1: Arriving in Tehran, visiting 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, 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. We stay overnight in Qeshm.

Day 3: Visit 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. Located in the Strait of Hormuz, 8 kilometers (5 miles) off the Iranian coast, Hormoz Island is part of Hormozgan Province with an area of 42 km². 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 Hormoz Island



Day 4: Visit 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 may be 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 cultivate 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 arthropods 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. Stay overnight in Hormoz Island

Days 5&6: Move from Qeshm to Kish by Sunny cruise ship

Sightseeing: natural beauties of Persian Gulf and neighboring islands aboard

Ships commuting between Iran major ports and other Persian Gulf countries are another cheap but efficient way of travelling. If you are visiting Iran, don't miss the voyage through Persian Gulf. Although it may take longer, we recommend travelling by ship or ferry to those interested. We take an exciting trip between Qeshm and Kish Islands by Sunny, the first-ever cruise ship to dock at Kish Island in nearly 40 years. Sunny is a 176-meter-long, 23-meter-wide liner with seven floors, 130 cabins and 417 beds. It has a variety of amenities, including a swimming pool, sauna, a restaurant, two movie theaters, a library, a conference hall, a cafe and playroom for children. It will take us two days to arrive in Kish Island by Sunny, but it will be an unforgettable experience for all those aboard enjoying the beauties of the neighboring islands on clear water of Persian Gulf. Stay overnight in Hormoz Island.

Day 7: Visit Kish

Sightseeing: ancient town of Harireh, Green Tree Recreational Complex, the ancient water cellars

Today we take a tour of Kish Island, a 91.5-square-kilometre (35.3 sq. mi) resort island in the Persian Gulf off the southern coast of Iran. Owing to its free trade zone status it is touted as a consumer's paradise, with numerous malls, shopping centers, tourist attractions, and resort hotels. About 1 million people visit the island annually. Kish Island was ranked among the world's 10 most beautiful islands by The New York Times in 2010, and is the fourth most visited vacation destination in the Middle East. It is a small island but it has numerous tourist attractions.

Our morning tour of the island includes a visit to the ancient town of Harireh. Most probably the ancient town of Harireh is the same town mentioned by the renowned Persian poet Sa'di in his book Golestan. According to the writings of Iranian and Arab historians, the town of Harireh had been located in the center of the northern part of the island, where the ruins of the city can be seen today. Visiting this ancient town is an opportunity to get acquainted with the island's history while having a nice time at the Green Tree Recreational Complex, situated near the ancient city.



Our evening tour of the city includes a visit to the ancient water cellars. The inhabitants of Kish, in the past, used a kind of traditional storage system to gather rainwater. These storages were dug in the ground and built with a domed roof. With the emergence of water desalination facilities, these storages lost their significance. But their remnants are still an interesting site for tourists to visit.

Afterwards you are free at leisure to have fun in the island. You can enjoy the island's natural attractions by swimming, diving, kite boarding, skiing, and boating on clear water of Persian Gulf, and paying a visit to the various shopping centers. Stay overnight in Kish.

Day 8: Visit Kish, fly to Ahvaz (flight time approx. 1 hour)

Sightseeing: Underground Town of Cariz

Today we continue our tour of the city with a visit to the Underground Town of Cariz. The Kish qanat is more than 2,500 years old, and currently it has been converted into an underground town at a depth of 16 meters below the surface, with an area of more than 10,000 sq. m. In the reconstruction of this qanat named Cariz, spaces have been allocated to handicraft stalls, restaurants and traditional teahouses, amphitheatres, conference centers, and art galleries. Efforts have been made to preserve the traditional and historic fabric of the site.

Later we take the flight to Ahvaz, a city in the southwest of Iran, and the capital of Khuzestan province. The seat of the province has, for the most of its history, been in the northern reaches of the land, first at Susa (Shush) and then at Shushtar. During a short spell in the Sasanian era, the capital of the province was moved to its geographical center, the river town of Hormuz-Ardashir (modern Ahvaz). However, later in the Sasanian time and throughout the Islamic era, the provincial seat returned and stayed at Shushtar, until the late Qajar period. With the increase in the international sea commerce arriving on the shores of Khuzestan, Ahvaz became a more suitable location for the provincial capital. Iran's only navigable river 'Karun' passes by the middle of the city. It has a long history dating back to the Achaemenid period. In the ancient times, it had been one of the main centers of the Academy of Jondishapur. It is home to several universities, institutions, prominent companies and sport clubs. In Iran, it is known for its ethnic diversity. It is home to Persians, Lurs, Arabs, Jews, Iranian Armenians and Mandaeans, hence different languages are spoken in it.

Day 9: Visit Shush, Shushtar, and Chogha Zanbil (244 k.m. nonstop drive approx. 4 hour)



Sightseeing: the tomb of Daniel, Apadana Palace and the historical castle of Susa, Shushtar waterfalls and historical bridges, Chogha Zanbil Temple and the historical relics of Haft Tapeh.

Today we get an early start for a visit to Susa (Shush), Shushtar, and Chogha Zanbil. The remnants and the historical relics of Susa are testament to the fact that this city was established several years before Christ. This is the region where one of the first governments of the world was formed, resulting in the merger between the two cultures of the Iranian plateau and Mesopotamia. We pay homage to the tomb of Daniel which has attracted a steady flow of pilgrims from all over the Middle East. Next, we will be enchanted by the exquisite beauty of the Apadana Palace and the historical castle of Susa. Then we visit the charming Shushtar Historical Hydraulic System and historical bridges. Finally we fill our imagination with wonder with a visit to the magnificent Chogha Zanbil Temple and the historical relics of Haft Tapeh. We stay overnight in Shushtar.

Day 10: Drive to Shiraz, visit Kurangun, Sarab-e Bahram, Bishapur & Chogan Gorge on the way (541 k.m. nonstop drive approx. 7 hour 35 mins)

Sightseeing: Kurangun, Sarab-e Bahram, Bishapur, Anahita Temple, Chogan Gorge

Today we move towards Shiraz. On the way, first we stop by Kurangun, a site near Fahlian in Fars province, known for its Bronze Age relief. The relief of Kurangun is one of only two Elamite rock reliefs in the Iranian province of Fars. The other one is at Naqsh-e Rostam. Both show nearly the same scene which is a scene of religious worship.

Then we move to Sarab-e Bahram, the site of a Sasanid rock relief in Iran. The Iranian king Bahram II was one of the rulers of the Sasanid dynasty who lost power to the Zoroastrian high priest Kartir. However, Bahram II left no less than ten rock reliefs. One of them can be found at Sarab-e Bahram, north of Bishapur along the Royal Road. It is actually the oldest Sasanid rock relief on which the king faces the spectators.

Afterwards we head for Bishapur which is an ancient city situated south of modern Faliyan, on the ancient road between Persis and Elam. The road linked the Sassanid capitals Istakhr (very close to Persepolis) and Ctesiphon. We will also visit Anahita Temple with its strange and interesting structure remaining from Sassanid time.

The last stop will be at 'Chogan Gorge' which is a valley with a river north of the ancient city of Bishapur. There are 6 giant rock carvings on walls telling the story of the Roman Empire defeat by the Sassanid king, Shapour II (309 - 379) and also King Bahram II (276–293) conquering Arabs and rebels. Finally we continue all the way to Shiraz. We arrive in Shiraz at night and transfer to our hotel. We stay overnight in Shiraz.



Day 11: 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. We stay overnight in Shiraz.

Day 12: Visit Shiraz, fly to Tehran, transfer to IKA and depart from Iran (flight time approx. 1 hour and 25 mins)

Sightseeing: Karim Khan Palace, Vakil Mosque, Vakil Bazaar, Saraye Moshir, Nasir Almolq Mosque, the tombs of Hafez and Saadi



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. What comes last is our flight to Tehran, transfer to IKA, and depart from Iran; the land of history, culture, nature, beauty and hospitality, of which you will have fond memories forever. On demand, you can take a direct flight from Shiraz to your hometown with Turkish, Qatar, and Austrian Airlines.

