

**10 days / 9 nights**

Starting from \$1450.00 per person based on double occupancy

\$550 single supplement

### **Day one**

Leave United States for your flight to Shiraz

### **Day two: Shiraz**

Arrive to Shiraz. Our guide is waiting to greet and transfer you to your hotel where you will stay overnight in Shiraz.

### **Day three: Shiraz**



The first full tour day begins an educational adventure led by our Group Leader. First we will visit the beautiful Narenjestan Garden, circa 1257 CE, which features a richly decorated pavilion set among graceful trees. Next, we'll walk to the Vakil Bazaar - one of the finest and most important bazaars of historical Iran, established in the 11<sup>th</sup> century CE.

The next visit is to the Tomb of Hafez, Iran's greatest lyric poet, followed by the Tomb of Sa'adi whose poems and tales are still known to every Iranian. After that, we will journey to the downtown part of the city to the Arg-E Karim (Karim Khan Citadel). It was named after a king of the 18<sup>th</sup> century Zand Dynasty, who made this city his capital. You will learn the history of the

citadel, King Karim Khan and the dynasty. Finally, we will enjoy the shining domes of Ali Ebn-e Hamze and Holy Shrine of Shah Cheragh.

You will spend the night in your hotel in Shiraz.

#### **Day four: Shiraz – Persepolis – Pasargadae – Yazd**



Once we check out of the hotel, we will take a vehicle to Yazd, one of the most distinctive cities in Iran, renowned for its Persian architecture.

Along the way, we will visit Persepolis in the heart of the fabled Persian Empire. This great architectural wonder was founded by Darius the Great who made it his capital in 518 BCE. Persepolis was a treasure city and one of the richest in the world. However, Alexander the Great conquered it in 330 BCE and took possession of 2500 tons of gold and silver, plus other fabulous assets. When he and his companions were feasting and drinking one night, Alexander is said to have drunkenly decided that this royal palace should be burned as revenge for the Persian destruction of Athens a century earlier. So, they burned the jewel of Persia. Today, there are enough remains to enable you to imagine its original splendor. You will get to see massive statues of winged bulls, a grand stairway wide enough for five horsemen to ride abreast, elegant columns and hundreds of carved figures.

Next, we'll stop at Pasargadae, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, to view the austere Tomb of Cyrus the Great (c. 600-530 BCE). Alexander the Great paid his respects here because Cyrus was one of his role models as an ideal ruler.

At night we will arrive in Yazd and check into the hotel, where you will stay overnight.

## Day five: Yazd – Isfahan



Day five is one of the more fascinating trips of the program, with commentary from a local expert.

Situated in a remote area where two deserts converge, Yazd dates back to c. 3000 BCE. It was a stop on the fabled Silk Road, but its location kept it safe from the ravages of war and destruction for centuries and therefore, its local culture remained strong. The city is made almost entirely of adobe and mud brick.

Beyond its importance as a desert “port” for trade, Yazd was one of the principal centers of the Zoroastrian religion. Zoroastrians highly revere fire as a holy entity that comes from the supreme god, Ahura Mazda, and invokes truth in the hearts and minds of believers. We call their places of worship “fire temples” where sacred flames were kept burning continuously.

We will visit the most important remaining fire temple in Iran, Atashkadeh in Yazd, plus we will see one of the so-called “towers of silence” where Zoroastrians took their dead to avoid contaminating the earth.

In the afternoon, we’ll go to Bagh-E-Dolatabad, a unique octagonal house with the tallest wind tower in the city. We will get a demonstration of the effectiveness of these towers first hand. Next we’ll visit the Amir Chakhmaq complex, one of the most extraordinary in all of Iran. In addition to the distinctive 3-story mosque, there are a number of other exceptional structures. We

will explore the renowned Yazd bazaar with its narrow, covered passages that feature products for which Iran is known, including high quality textiles, carpets, sweets, nuts, and more.

When we finish, we will take the road to Isfahan, which is less than 350 km with frequent stops en route. Once in Isfahan, you can take a relaxing walk in the bank of the famous Zayanderoud.

You will spend the night in your hotel in Isfahan.

### **Day six: Isfahan**



Iranians say that Isfahan, capital of the Safavid Dynasty from the 16th century on is “half the world.” Our exploration, led by a local expert, will include two of the most impressive mosques amid a myriad of remarkable sites. At the center of the city is Naqsh-e Jahan, one of the world’s biggest squares, created in the 17th century. The huge, open plaza is framed by a wall of arches and surrounded by the Masjed-e Sheikh Lotfollah and the Masjed-e Imam mosques. We will admire their magnificent architecture and tile-work.

We will also walk through the Ali Qapu Palace with its enchanting music room and balcony overlooking the Maidan where the Safavid kings sat to watch polo tournaments. We will cross through Meydan and enter the bazaar that was and is one of the most important elements of every Persian and Iranian city, sitting at the center of the neighborhood and social consciousness. The Isfahan Bazaar is one of the country’s most famous, with stalls of textile and carpet merchants, makers of jewelry and handicrafts, vendors of spices, and much more.

You will spend the night in your hotel in Isfahan.

## Day seven: Isfahan – Matin-Abaad-Camp



After you check out of the hotel, we will have several more visits before we leave by motorcoach to Matinabad. First, we will visit the magnificent Jame Mosque with its famous Uljaytu Mihrab of the Il-Khanid Period, an artistic treasure of stucco densely decorated with Quranic inscriptions. We will also visit Chehel Sotun, a pavilion constructed as a reception hall for visiting dignitaries by Shah Abbass II, and Hasht Behesht, an octagonal pleasure palace built a few years later.

We will proceed to Matinabad and will meet local villagers by experiencing Atashouni; gathering around a campfire to enjoy a starry night.

You will sleep in your hotel in Matinabad.

## Day eight: Matin-Abaad – Kashan – Tehran



After you check out of your hotel room, you will enjoy camel riding and optional cycling in Matinabad before we drive to Kashan. Kashan is known as the “City of Carpets and Roses” with a rich history and culture.

After our arrival in Kashan, we will visit the Fin garden, a historical Persian garden that features Kahan’s Fin Bath. In 1852 the bath became famous because Amir Kabir, the Qajarid chancellor was murdered there by an assassin sent by King Nasereddin Shah. Completed in 1590, the Fin Garden is the oldest extant garden in Iran.

Next, we’ll drive to Tehran and stop at the entrance of city to visit the Imam Khomeini mausoleum.

You will check into your hotel in Tehran and spend the night in your hotel.

### **Day nine: Tehran**



For your final day in Iran, we'll explore this grand city, which is the capital and the largest of the country. It has seen tremendous growth since it was reinstated as the national capital and its metropolitan area is now home to approximately 15 million residents.

Your journey begins with our exploration of the Golestan Palace, the city's oldest and most lavish monuments, which was built around a garden. Its richly ornamental interiors feature artistic styles of the Qajar dynasty (also incorporating technological advances of the 18<sup>th</sup> century) that have continued to inspire Iranian art and architecture. The palace complex houses the Versailles-inspired, mirror encrusted Marble Throne Hall used for the coronation of the last Shah, and an Ethnographic Museum.

Next, we will explore the National Museum of Iran that preserves the country's historical and cultural record through the presentation of some 300,000 artifacts with the oldest dating back more than 30,000 years. Its two buildings are dedicated to pre-Islamic and post-Islamic periods. Highlights include everything from gigantic stone reliefs found in Persepolis to ancient coins and historic copies of the Qur'an.

For the final evening, we will go to Milad tower, which is a multi-purpose tower that gives you a vast, skyline view of Tehran. A most memorable view of this great city.

You will spend the night in your hotel in Tehran.

### Day ten: Departure

This travel day starts with arly morning hotel check out and group transfer to airport for flight back to your home.

### List of hotels:

City

Hotel

Tehran

Shiraz

Yazd

Isfahan

Matin Abad

Asareh / Mashhad / Kowsar

Parseh / Ario / Karim Khan

Daad / Moshir / Mehr

Pirouzi / Setareh / Sheikh Bahaii

Room in Matin-Abad eco-camp

**Tour includes:**

Rooms, based on double occupancy.

Daily breakfast.

Transfers upon arrival and departure.

All sightseeing tours mentioned in the itinerary.

Visa processing services (Fees not included)

**Not Included:**

Air fare to Iran and back.

Tips in hotels and guides

Luggage portorage tips.

Any kind of drinks with your meals during your day trips.

Personal expenses such as phone calls, laundry etc.

Meals.

Visa fee.