



IRAN UNVEILED
HIDDEN GEMS OF PERSIA

October 14 - November 03, 2024
Led by Local Guide

Iran is home to a breathless mix of spectacular madrassas, exquisite mosques and some of the most wonderful examples of Islamic architecture in the world. Everywhere you look, the magnificence of 2,500 years of history lies all around you. Ancient Persia has been the seat of many civilizations and unique contributions in poetry, art, architecture, science and history. Many of Iran's achievers have contributed to our modern world. Most of the country's archaeological gems are well preserved and portray a rich historical heritage. Your tour will not only explore ancient ruins and colorful cities but also exotic bazaars and old baths. Marvel at ancient monuments and beautifully tiled mosques. Stroll through medieval bazaars that remain much as they were centuries ago. Stop to visit local nomadic tribes when driving across the vast country. Your journey will take you to Yazd the center of Zoroastrian culture, to Shiraz city of poets which has had major Jewish and Christian communities and the UNESCO World Heritage sites of Isfahan, and Persepolis. Come and discover Iran, a repository of grand relics and ruins.

Ihab Zaki
Managing Director

Monday, October 14 Arrive in Tabriz (IRAN)



Upon arrival in the early morning in **Tabriz**, meet and transfer to *Pars Hotel* or similar for check-in, have some rest, and then in the late morning, begin our tour with a visit to **St. Stepanos Church** (UNESCO World Heritage Site), which is one of the oldest and most beautiful Armenian churches in the area (10-12 century A.D). The church was named after St. Stepanos (Stephanus), one of the first Christian martyrs, and it is located in the green valley of Darreh Sham at the far western frontier of Iran, next to the border with Azerbaijan. Return to the *Hotel* for dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Note: The night of October 13 is included, as many flights land in the very early morning of October 14.

Tuesday, October 15 Tabriz



Begin a full day sightseeing with a visit to the **Blue Mosque**, known as the "Turquoise of Islam." Then head to **Azarbaijan Museum**, displaying a fine collection of pre-historic and historical artifacts found in the area, then drive by the **13th century Arg-e Alishah**, which was originally a magnificent Friday Mosque but turned into a fortress in the 19th century. Visit the **Constitution House, Poets Cemetery (Maghbarat-ol-Shoa'ara)**, and the extensive & interesting **Tabriz Bazaar (UNESCO site)**, and **El-Goli Park**. If time permits, we will do a short excursion to the intriguing **troglodyte village** of Kandovan, up at the heights of Mt. Sahand, a volcanic mountain. In Kandovan, people have carved their houses in the rocks and still live in them as in ancient times. Return to the *Hotel* in Tabriz for dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Wednesday, October 16 Tabriz - Zanjan



After breakfast, begin the day with a drive to **Takab** to visit the magnificent Sassanian site of **Takht-e-Soleyman**, the remains of the Sassanian palaces and fire temple; from the time of the Magi, who nurtured the sacred fire of Azar Gushnasp beside the bottomless lake of deepest blue until today. Takht-e-Soleyman (the Throne of Solomon) has remained for all who see it as a sacred and enigmatic place. The massive stone walls and

remnants of the thirty-eight watch towers, built around the lake by the Sassanians in the 3rd century A.D. are part of the complex's left. Have a glimpse at the **crater of Zendan-e-Soleyman** (the Prison of Solomon) from a distance. Continue to **Zanjan**, and upon arrival, transfer to *Grand Zanjan Hotel* or similar for check-in, dinner, and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Thursday, October 17 Zanjan - Hamadan



Begin the day with a drive to **Soltaniye**, known for its mausoleum of the **Mongol Sultan Oljeitu Khodabande**, which has one of the largest domes in the world. Admire this UNESCO World Heritage site's magnificent 14th-century tomb tower, whose decorations and patterns carved into plastered walls have inspired geometric and floral patterns on Persian textiles. After the visit, continue to Hamadan and, upon arrival, transfer to *BuAli Hotel* or similar for check-in, dinner, and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Friday, October 18 Hamadan - Kermanshah



Enjoy a full-day tour in **Hamadan**, the capital of the Median Empire in the 7th century B.C., and the summer capital of the Achaemenid kings in the 5th century B.C. The visits include **Ganjnameh**, the inscriptions by Darius I and his son, Xerxes, carved on the rocks of the mountain, the **Tomb of Esther & Mordecai**, a major Jewish pilgrimage center, and the **Tomb of Avicenna**, Iran's celebrated philosopher/scientist/physician, whose prescriptions are still used by Western and Iranian medical universities and the Stone Lion, an intriguing statue believed to date from the Hellenistic Period when Alexander invaded Iran, supposedly, made to honor his slain general. Drive to **Kermanshah** via Kangavar, a small town dating back to 200 BC., to visit the **Temple of Anahita**, goddess of water and fertility. Continue to **Bisutun**; see texts that helped decipher the cuneiform script. The 400-foot-high inscription carved into the cliffside has been recently restored and has been under restoration for several years. Transfer to *Parsian Hotel* or similar for check-in, dinner, and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Saturday, October 19

Kermanshah - Dezful



Begin the day with a visit to the significant Sassanian reliefs at **Tagh-e-Bostan**, depicting royal hunting scenes and the investiture of the Sassanian kings. Drive to **Pol-e-Dokhtar** to see the remains of the Sassanian Bridge, then continue down into **Mesopotamia**, arriving at *Tourist Hotel* in Dezful for check-in, dinner, and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Sunday, October 20

Dezful - Susa - Ahwaz



Begin the day with a drive to **Ahwaz** and visit **Susa** and the remains of the **Achaemenian palaces** (plus the nearby Tomb of Biblical Prophet Daniel). Susa (Soush or Shush) is one of the oldest cities in the world (and the latest addition of UNESCO sites in Iran - June 2015). Excavations have established that people lived at the Acropolis in 5000 B.C. and have shown evidence of urban structures about 4000 B.C. It was also the favorite residence of the Persian king Darius. The scene in the Biblical book of Esther is set in Susa. Continue to **Haft-Tappeh** (Elamite Necropolis) and **Chogha-Zanbil**, a UNESCO World Heritage site, to see the ziggurat built around 1250 B.C. by the Elamite king "Untash Napirisha" is now referred to as "Untash-Gal." Drive to **Shushtar**, a small town perched on limestone cliffs above the Karun River, whose past can be traced through a remarkable series of interconnecting channels, watermills, dams, bridges, and irrigation works. Then continue to **Ahwaz** and, upon arrival, transfer to *Fajr Hotel* or similar for check-in, dinner, and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Monday, October 21

Ahwaz - Shiraz



Begin the day with a drive to **Shiraz**, visiting en route **Bishapur**, the remains of the Sassanian city built by **Shapur 1st (241-273 A.D.)**, the second Sassanian king. The building complex includes a central chamber, a large courtyard, which had been covered with impressive mosaics, and the remains of a temple dedicated to Anahita, the Goddess of Water and Fertility. On both sides of a narrow gorge, there are also **six Sassanian rock/reliefs** at Tang-e-Chogan, commemorating Shapur's victories over the Romans and other adversaries. Upon arrival in Shiraz, transfer to *Homa Hotel* or similar for check-in, dinner, & overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Tuesday, October 22

Shiraz



Have a full day exploring the city of **Shiraz**, known as the city of "Roses and Nightingales" for its famous gardens. Begin the day with a visit to the residential **citadel of Karim Khan** of the Zand Dynasty, the pink-tiled 19th-century **Mosque of Nasir-ol-Molk**, the **Qajar Narenjestan Garden** and **House, the Vakil Complex**, and the **Bazaar of Shiraz**. Visit the 9th-century Friday mosque, which is the oldest of Shiraz's most interesting buildings. After lunch, have a chance to visit a nomadic carpet workshop/gallery where you can shop or learn

about tribal rugs. Then we will continue our tour of Shiraz. Return to the *Hotel* for dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Wednesday, October 23

Shiraz (Persepolis)



Enjoy a full day exploring the city of Persepolis with a visit to **Persepolis**, the magnificent springtime capital city of the ancient Persian empire, with its spectacular reliefs and towering columns, then visit the **rock-cut tombs** of the Persian kings at **Naghsh-e Rostam** and the **Sassanian reliefs at Naghsh-e Rajab**. Return to the *Hotel* for dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Thursday, October 24

Shiraz - Yazd



Begin the day with a drive to **Yazd**, visiting en route **Pasargadae**, the site of the impressive **tomb of Cyrus the Great** (founder of the Persian Empire), and the remains of his palaces and royal gardens, and **Abarkouh** one of the ancient Iranian cities and was built on the foot of a nearby mountain. Arrive in Yazd and transfer to *Moshir/Safaeiyeh Hotel* or similar for check-in, dinner, and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Friday, October 25

Yazd



Begin the day with a morning visit to the Zoroastrian Sacred places, the eternal **Fire Temple**, the tombs perched atop the hill, and the **funerary Tower of Silence**. Also, visit Yazd's Islamic sites, including **Friday Mosque** (1324 A.D.) with the highest portal and minarets in Iran and the **Mirchkhmagh Maidan** and Mosque. Other notable Islamic monuments in the old Fahadan area of Yazd are the Seljuk shrine dedicated to the **Twelve Shi'ite Imams** (currently under restoration); and the old **Ziaieyeh Madrassa**, popularly known as Zendan-e-Eskandar or Alexander's Prison. There are also many beautiful old houses in Yazd, among them the **Dowlat-Abad Garden**, with 18th-century feudal hexagonal houses and the highest 'badguir' (wind-catcher) in Iran. End the day with a visit to a local **fabric and tile workshop** in the afternoon, then head back to the *Hotel* for dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Saturday, October 26

Yazd - Isfahan



Begin the day with a drive to **Isfahan** via Naein with a stop at the city of **Maybod** to see the ancient **Sasanian Castle of Narin Ghale**, the most ancient monument of Meybod, and has very high dried mud walls. It is located in the middle of Meybod's historical texture. Continue to **Isfahan** and, upon arrival, transfer to *Abbasi Hotel* or similar for check-in, dinner, and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Sunday, October 27

Isfahan



Enjoy a full day sightseeing in Isfahan, the 17th-century capital of the Safavids, referred to as Nesf-e-Jahan or Half of the World, including a city tour of Isfahan and visits to

the **Palace of Chehel-Sotun** (the Forty Columns) set in a beautiful park, and the vank church. In the afternoon, head to visit **Hasht Behesht** and some **art workshops** to see paintings and the old bridges built during the rule of Shah Abbas the Great. Return to the *Hotel* for dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Monday, October 28
Isfahan



After breakfast, head out for sightseeing in the magnificent city of Isfahan with a visit to **Imam Square** and **Mosque, Sheikh Lotfollah mosque** with its splendid architecture and tile work, **Aliqapu Palace**, and **Friday mosque & Bazaar**. Return to the *Hotel* for dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Tuesday, October 29
Isfahan - Kashan - Tehran



Begin the day with a drive to Tehran, stopping en route at **Natanz & Kashan** to visit the **Tabab-Tabai Mansion**, built in the late 18th century, and the **Fin Garden**, a beautiful example of a walled Persian Garden. This city epitomizes everything grand from old Persia, its **mosques, caravanserais, gardens, and homes**. Continue the drive to Tehran with a possible stop at the **mausoleum of Imam Khomeini**. Upon arrival in Tehran, transfer to *Espinas Hotel* or similar for check-in, dinner, and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Wednesday, October 30
Tehran



After breakfast, start a full-day visit to the **Golestan Palace/Museum Complex**, the former residence of the late 19th and early 20th century Qajar Kings of Iran, with several museums, including the **Marble Throne Room**, and the **Emarat-e-Badgir** (Wind Catcher Building). Also, visit **Iran's National Archeological Museum**: displaying an authenticated collection of pre-historic and ancient artifacts with pottery dating back to 6-7 millennium B.C., and the Islamic with a unique collection of artifacts, manuscripts, silver and bronze objects and tiles from different post-Islamic periods in Iran, displayed on three floors. Enjoy dinner at the local restaurant and then return to the *Hotel* for your overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Thursday, October 31
Tehran - Mashhad



After breakfast, continue visits in Tehran by heading to see the **Abguineh Museum** (also named the Glass & Ceramics Museum), a valuable collection of pre-Islamic and Islamic glass and ceramics, beautifully displayed and located in an elegant early 20th-century mansion and **Carpet Museum**. Transfer to the airport for your afternoon flight to Mashhad. Upon arrival, meet and transfer to *Homa Hotel* or similar for check-in, dinner, and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Friday, November 01
Mashhad



After breakfast, begin the day with a visit to the massive complex of the holy shrine of **Imam Reza**, the 8th Shiite Imam. Drive to Tous historical city and visit the **tomb** and **museum of Firdausi**, the famous epic poet and the remainders of Tous fortifications and **Haroon's prison**. Continue the drive to **Torghabeh**, a countryside town famous for its handicrafts, nuts, and dried fruits. Return to the *Hotel* for dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Saturday, November 02
Mashad (Nishapur)



After breakfast, head to **Nishapur** (the earliest recorded capital of Khorasan Province, once a thriving literary, artistic, and academic center). On the way, visit **Ghadangah-e-Imam Reza**, a late Safavid period and important pilgrimage place dedicated to Imam Reza (believed to have his footprint). Upon arrival in **Neishapur**, head to visit the tombs of Iran's greatest mystic poets, **Omar Khayyam** and **Farid-Eddin Attar**, and the well-known contemporary painter **Kamal-al-Molk**, all located in the garden of **Imamzadeh Mahrouh** (mausoleum dating from the Safavid period with excellent tile decoration). Return to the *Hotel* in Mashhad for dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Sunday, November 03
Mashad - USA



Transfer in the very early morning to the airport for your flight back to the US.

"We reserve the right to change the order of activities/visits or sites due to unexpected events such as flight cancellations or changes of schedule, or any other reasons beyond our control. We will do our best to ensure that any necessary changes when/if needed to meet the needs of our clients".

Special Notes on Travel to Iran:

We will be covering great distances by road during this journey. The streets are perfect, and the air-conditioned bus is very comfortable. You will often be served cold water, tea, and fruits. We will make several rest stops (some will not be five-star bathrooms, and others will be in the beautiful wilderness). It is important to recognize the exhausting nature of some long driving days and some of the site visits where you might have to walk on uneven terrain. By signing up for this tour, participants are acknowledging their complete understanding and acceptance of all terms and conditions and are admitting that they are in good physical and mental health and are equipped with an open mind, a sense of adventure, and a tolerant and patient spirit to cope with the tour.

Tour Cost (Land Only):

6 - 8 travelers: \$8,995.00

9 - 12 travelers: \$8,495.00

Per person sharing in double occupancy

Single Supplement: \$1,295.00

Price based on group size minimum of 6 participants and maximum of 12 participants

Trip Grade: II Lodging Level: ***_****



Tour Includes:

- Airport / Hotel / Airport transfers.
- Accommodation at deluxe and first-class properties in most cities & superior tourist class hotels in smaller towns as mentioned or similar.
- Travel by modern A/C motor coach.
- All meals as mentioned in the itinerary (B: Breakfast, L: Lunch and D: Dinner).
- All Tours as per itinerary & entrance fees to the sites and museums mentioned.
- Escort of lecturer throughout the trip (provided minimum number of travelers is reached).
- English Speaking local guide.
- A bottle of water per passenger per day on touring days plus juice, coffee, and tea on the bus
- Gratuities to guide, drivers, and porters (provided minimum number of travelers is reached).

Trip Grade:

II Active – Some hikes, slightly more demanding walks at or to sites, few elevations, comfortable but busy schedule and some long rides and extensive drives.

Lodging Level:

*** **Superior:** Lodges and hotels with additional amenities, refined service, and comfort level acceptable to western standards. (3 or 4 stars)

**** **Luxury:** Regular style- usually large- hotels, typical western standard with ample venues, and full amenities. (4 or 5 stars)

Tour does not include:

- International air USA-Tabriz / MASHad-USA.
- Iran Visa (obtainable from embassy in DC for \$160.00 - Subject to change).
- Any required pre arrival & pre departure PCR tests.
- Items of a personal nature (camera fees, laundry, emails, excess luggage, etc.).
- Transfers if not arriving/departing on tour dates.
- Dayroom/overnights necessitated by changes in airline schedules.
- Gratuity to your tour lecturer (Optional).
- Trip surcharge to operate below required minimum participants.
- Travel protection insurance. (HIGHLY RECOMMENDED)

