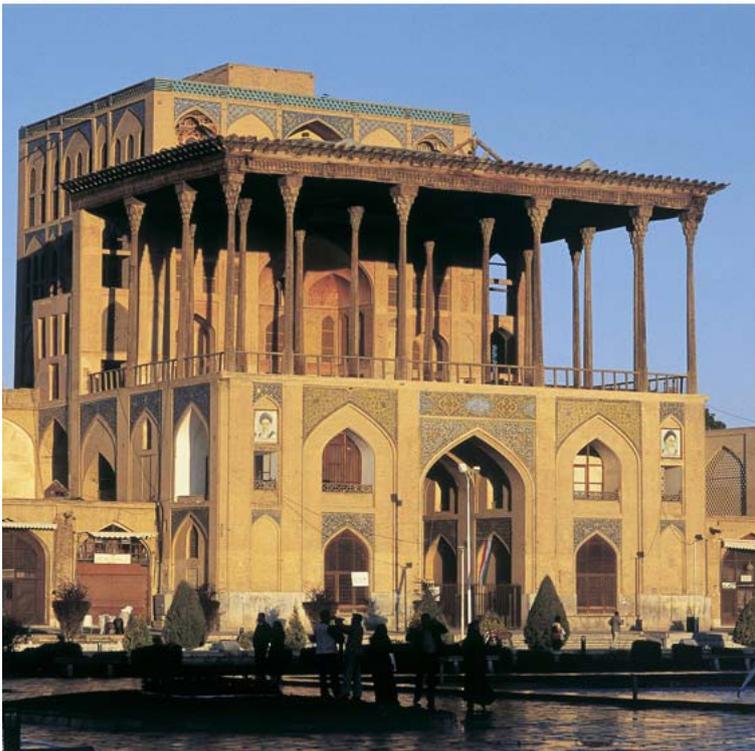


PERSIA UNVEILED

Discover the highlights and hidden treasures of this ancient land

15 DAYS STARTING TEHRAN
OCT 23 - NOV 6, 2017

with Steve Mortimer



Byroads



PERSIA UNVEILED

Trip Outline

There are few places in the world where international opinion and local realities are polar opposites. If you can put the barrage of negative publicity to one side, you'll discover a wonderful, historic country whose people are well educated, courteous and incredibly welcoming.

We begin our journey in Tehran, where we visit three of its finest museums before flying south to Shiraz, a lovely city known for its gardens and romantic poets. Two days allows ample time to see the major sights, explore the atmospheric Vakil Bazaar and make a side-trip to the great city of Persepolis, with its magnificent Apadana staircases.

Driving east, we see the tomb of Cyrus the Great and then make our way via Abarqu to Yazd Province, a highlight of our tour. The next three days are spent exploring our surroundings, heading off the beaten track to see little-visited mudbrick citadels, tranquil gardens, old merchant homes and ancient villages. An evening is spent in an authentic caravanserai – and we have a full day to discover Yazd, full of traditional homes with their signature wind-towers, or *badgirs*.

North of Yazd we visit Kharanaq and Meybod, where we explore Narin fortress and see the amazing Safavid icehouse. We stop to visit the exquisite mosque at Nain before arriving in Isfahan, the 'jewel in the crown'. Here we have two and a half days to see the many wonderful sights including the magnificent Naksh-e Jahan Square, Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque, Imam Mosque, Chehel Sotun Palace, Vank Cathedral and the bazaars.

Driving out of Isfahan we visit the historic 14th century mosque at Natanz and spend a night in the picturesque hillside village of Abyaneh, which we explore in the afternoon. Further north is Kashan, celebrated for its fine ceramic production dating back to the 12th century. Here we see two magnificent 19th century Qajar houses as well as the Bagh-e Tarikhi-ye Fin Garden, considered one of the best in Iran.

Back in Tehran, we spend a final day exploring the Jewellery Museum and the fabulous Golestan Palace. Our tour concludes the following day.

Tour Host – Steve Mortimer



Steve Mortimer heads up Byroads Travel and will be your host on this tour. Steve has nearly 30 years in the travel industry and has travelled to well over 100 countries. He has worked with a number of well-known Australian adventure travel companies. Most recently he has been involved in researching and developing holidays in several different regions of the world including Latin America and the Middle East where he lived for two years in Egypt.

Steve likes nothing better than getting out and about with like-minded travellers, sharing his knowledge and introducing them to some of the world's most interesting places. A particular feature of his tours is the chance to see places that others often miss (or simply don't know about!), such as the pueblos blancos or 'white villages' of Andalusia, Sri Lanka's stunning south coast or the wonderful vernacular architecture of Iran's Yazd Province.

With our itinerary you can be confident you'll visit all the 'must see' attractions – and much more, however there are some days when you'll have time to wander and make some of your own discoveries. Throughout the tour local guides are employed to provide a wealth of background information and share their extensive local knowledge.



ITINERARY STARTS IN TEHRAN

MON 23 OCT: TEHRAN – Upon arrival you are met and transferred to your hotel. Today is simply an arrival day and we will plan to meet up in the evening. Pre-tour accommodation is available if you wish to arrive a day earlier (see back page for details).

TUE 24 OCT: TEHRAN – There is much to see in Iran's busy capital and today we visit the Archaeological Museum, the fabulous Reza Abbasi Museum and the Glass and Ceramics Museum. (B)

WED 25 OCT: TEHRAN-SHIRAZ – In the morning we fly south to Shiraz. In the afternoon we visit the stunning Mosque of Nasir ol-Mulk, the Narenjestan, the atmospheric Vakil Bazaar and the Tomb of Hafez. (B)

THU 26 OCT: SHIRAZ, PERSEPOLIS – We drive east to Persepolis, the glorious ancient city of Darius the Great, with its Hall of 100 Columns and the celebrated Apadana staircases. Nearby are the splendid rock-cut tombs at Naksh-e Rostam. On our return to Shiraz we stop to visit the lovely Eram Gardens. (B)

FRI 27 OCT: SHIRAZ-PASARGADAE-ZEINODIN – Driving east, we visit the tomb of Cyrus the Great and then leave the green hills behind as we descend into the arid plains of central Iran. We stop at Abarqu for lunch and continue to Zeinodin where we spend the night in an original and authentic caravanserai. (BD)

SAT 28 OCT: YAZD PROVINCE – Today is spent exploring two fabulous and little-known mud brick citadels at Saryazd and Mehrpadin. The former is over 2000 years old. We then head into Yazd where we check in to our traditional hotel, once the home of a wealthy merchant family. Later we drive out to visit Towers of Silence. (B)

SUN 29 OCT: YAZD – The morning is free to explore your surroundings. In the afternoon we take a walk through the old city, visiting the stunning Jama Masjid, Alexander's Prison and Khaneh Lariha (an impressive 19th century merchant's home). (B)

MON 30 OCT: YAZD PROVINCE – The countryside around Yazd conceals plenty of hidden gems. Driving north we stop to see the ancient fortress and amazing Safavid icehouse at Meybod. We then head east to Kharanaq, a lovely, crumbling old village full of interesting nooks and crannies. Today we'll have a typical Iranian 'picnic lunch' before returning to Yazd for our final night. (B)

TUE 31 OCT: YAZD-ARDAKAN-NA'IN-ISFAHAN – Driving north we stop at Ardakan to visit the Taghdiri Mansion. At Na'in, we visit the splendid Masjid-e Jami (Great Mosque) and the Ethnographic Museum, housed in a wonderful 16th century Safavid home. Arriving in Isfahan, our base for the next three nights, we enjoy a late afternoon stroll into the great square. (B)

WED 1 NOV/THU 2 NOV: ISFAHAN – Leaving the best till last, we have two full days to explore this magical city of mosques, museums, bridges and bazaars. We see all the highlights, including the immense Naksh-e Jahan Square, Imam Mosque, Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque, Masjid-e Jami, Ali Qapu pavilion, Chehel Sutun and Vank Cathedral. There will also be time to see the celebrated bridges and explore the bazaar on your own. (B)

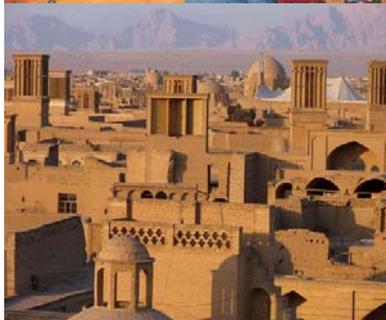
FRI 3 NOV: ISFAHAN-NATANZ-ABYANEH – Today we drive out to Natanz to see the 13th century mosque, with its beautiful portal. We then continue up into the hills, to the picturesque village of Abyaneh. After checking in to our hotel we enjoy a stroll through the village, with time to explore on our own. (B)

SAT 4 NOV: ABYANEH-KASHAN-TEHRAN – We drive north to Kashan, known for its superb ceramic industry dating back to the 12th century. We visit two palatial 19th century residences and see the celebrated Bagh-I Fin gardens, before heading to Tehran for the night. (B)

SUN 5 NOV: TEHRAN – Our last day of sightseeing in Tehran includes the Carpet Museum, Golestan Palace (former royal residence of the Qajar family), and the fabulous Jewellery Museum. Later we drive into the city centre to see the Azadi Tower before returning to our hotel. Tonight we'll plan to go out for a final dinner together. (B)

MON 6 NOV: TEHRAN – Our journey ends today, after breakfast. Post-tour accommodation is available if you wish to stay on for a night or two (refer to the back page). Airport transfers can be easily arranged from your hotel. (B)

This trip can be joined with our 13 Day 'Transoxiana' tour of Uzbekistan.



Prices & Inclusions

15 Day Persia Unveiled

Price in US Dollars: USD 3895 (per person twin-share)

Single Supplement: USD 695

Price includes: Services of Steve Mortimer as Tour Escort, local tour leader/guide, arrival transfer, all local transportation, 14 nights accommodation in comfortable and/or character hotels, meals as indicated.

Not Included: Visa fees (see opposite), travel insurance (compulsory on all trips), additional meals, drinks, departure transfer, laundry and tips.

Accommodation: If you are familiar with the Byroads style of touring you will know there is often an emphasis on 'boutique' or character hotels. In Iran this isn't easy, but our preference is for small hotels, in good locations. In Shiraz and Isfahan we stay in comfortable 3-star hotels, which are much better than some of the 4-star properties! In Tehran it's a good 4-star property not far from the museums; in Abyaneh our family-run hotel is simple but the village is full of interest. The highlights are our authentic Caravanserai at Zeinodin, and also Yazd, where our traditional family home is particularly atmospheric.



Zeinodin Caravanserai



Yazd Hotel



Abyaneh Village



Abyaneh Hotel



Isfahan Hotel



Tehran Hotel

Food and drink: Breakfast is included every day, along with one dinner. At other times we are free to enjoy a variety of different dishes in local restaurants. Iran is a 'dry' country, so alcohol is not available, but there's a good range of soft drinks, fresh juices and – of course – plenty of tea...

Group size: Maximum 16

Additional Expenses: Food is not at all expensive in Iran, but the servings are substantial! You should allow around US\$10 for lunch and around US\$10-\$20 for dinner. In addition you should budget for any personal shopping you may wish to do. Please also allow extra funds to tip your local tour leader/guide, drivers, porters etc (full details will be provided in the pre-departure information).

Bookings: Travel on Q (Sydney) is the sole booking agent for this tour. Please register your interest ASAP in order to secure your place and note there are a limited number of single rooms available. A non-refundable deposit of AUD 750 per person is required, to secure your place, with final payment due 60 days prior to tour commencement.

Travel on Q (Carole Grassby and Tina Briggs)

Level 1/128 Crown Street

Darlinghurst Sydney NSW 2010

Tel: (02) 9357 6800 Email: travel@travelonq.com.au

Currency: Due to the volatility of global currencies the tour price has been quoted in United States Dollars (USD) however you will pay for your tour in Australian dollars based on the buying rate set by Westpac Banking Corporation on the due date of your final balance.

Flights and Transfers: Emirates, Qatar and Etihad Airlines have the best schedules to and from Iran. An arrival transfer is included; however the departure transfer is not and can be arranged on request.

Extra nights in Tehran: Extra nights can be booked pre and post tour but you must advise Travel on Q well in advance to ensure availability.

Visa for Iran: The visa process for Iran is not complicated, just bureaucratic. About 8 weeks before departure we will apply to our agent in Tehran for a visa code. Once this has been issued you can then apply for the visa at your nearest Embassy. If you would like us to process your visa, you **MUST be residing in Australia six weeks** prior to the departure of this tour. The cost of the visa, plus any processing fees, will be added to your final account. Alternatively, it is currently possible to obtain a 15-day Tourist Visa on arrival in Tehran.

Documentation: Upon receipt of your final payment, a comprehensive field guide will be mailed to you and you will be sent the relevant tour and accommodation vouchers prior to departure.

What next? Contact Travel on Q to discuss your travel plans and to make your booking. Further information is also available at www.byroads.com.au.

Byroads

