

IRAN

Saturday 5 - Thursday 24 October 2019

19 nights

TOUR OVERVIEW

Few countries can boast such a profound and intriguing history or such an astounding array of archeological and cultural gems as Iran. Spend three nights in Tehran seeing the major sights and museums laden with treasure. Head north to the fine bazaar in Tabriz before flying to Shiraz for four nights. From this base, explore the grandeur of the ancient Persian empires at magnificent sites like Persepolis, Bishapur and Pasargadae. Two nights in Yazd gives time to explore the unique desert architecture of wind towers and courtyard homes with underground water channels, some extending more than 50 kms and dating back over 2000 years. Finish in Isfahan, the pearl in the Persian crown, for three nights marvelling at the majestic buildings, blue-tiled mosques and beautiful bridges. You will stay in 4 and 5 star accommodation and travel with well-informed guides. As all meals in Iran are included, there will be many chances to sample some delicious food. Visitors are still a novelty in Iran and on our last tour, people were overwhelmed with the friendliness of the people they met. For some this was the highlight of the tour.



TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

- Walk around the sublime, turquoise-tiled domes and minarets of Isfahan's Naqsh-e Jahan Square, over the picturesque bridges and in the footsteps of some of history's most outstanding figures.
- Marvel at the mud-brick architecture in Yazd.
- Spend time in the bazaars of Tabriz, Shiraz and Isfahan when you can find an extraordinary range of Persian antiques and carpets and tempting handicrafts.
- Admire the artistic harmony of monumental staircases, imposing gateways and exquisite reliefs of Achaemenid's ancient capital, Persepolis.
- Relish the city of poets, nightingales in splendid gardens among tall Cyprus trees and the exquisite mosques of Shiraz.
- Enjoy some of the world's most exquisite tile work.
- Sample the delights of Iranian cuisine in dishes such as chicken in pomegranate sauce.

TOUR MANAGER

Your tour manager is Andrew Matheson, a keen and adventurous traveller who enjoys making tours a special and memorable experience for group members. His careers as a diplomat and as an agricultural development consultant have seen him working in both bustling and remote places on pretty much every continent in the world, and he has travelled extensively for leisure.

As tour manager Andrew applies his strong organisational skills to make sure the trip runs to plan and delivers the best for all tour members. Iran remains one of Andrew's favourite countries, and he is keen to share it with you on this tour.



TOUR PRICE *Ex Auckland*

Share twin per person	NZD\$11,988
Single supplement (limited availability)	NZD\$ 1,970

Please contact Calder & Lawson Tours if you are interested in a single occupancy place.

GROUP SIZE Minimum 10, maximum 18

VARIATIONS IN TRAVEL We can make arrangements for any travel you would like to do before or after this tour, or book business class seats for the flights. Please contact us.

TOUR INCLUSIONS

- The services of an experienced New Zealand based Calder & Lawson tour manager
- Economy class airfares
- 17 nights in 4 - 5 star accommodation
- Meals included: Breakfast, all lunches and dinners in Iran
- Other meals as specified in the itinerary
- A national English speaking guide
- Local guides
- Modern air-conditioned Volvo coach
- All group transfers
- Admissions as detailed in the itinerary
- All tips for local guides and drivers
- Pre-tour material

TOUR EXCLUSIONS

- Airline taxes
- Personal expenses
- Travel insurance
- Beverages during included meals, unless specified
- Hotel portage

IS THIS TOUR FOR ME?

To get the most from this tour, participants need to have a good level of fitness enabling 2-3 hours walking and 1-2 hours standing on an excursion. The walks will sometimes be across uneven terrain, with slopes and stairs. Travelling in October is considered to be the shoulder season and temperatures are moderate. However there may be times when it will be quite hot. Women will need to wear clothing that covers their hair, arms and legs and is relatively shapeless. There are a number of quite long coach rides with relatively early starts and long days. Alcohol is prohibited.



DAILY ITINERARY

Saturday 5 October 2019

New Zealand - Dubai

Meals: In flight

Depart Auckland this evening for your overnight flight to Dubai and your connecting flight through to Tehran, arriving about 10am on Sunday 6 October.

Sunday 6 October

Tehran

Meals: B/L/D

Overnight: Tehran

Transfer to the hotel where we have arranged an early check in. Over lunch, an introductory lecture will give an overview of the country, its history, people and daily life. There will be some free time before an evening visit to Ab-o-Atash Park to see magnificent views of Tehran over Tabi'at Bridge.

Monday 7 October

Tehran

Meals: B/L/D

Overnight: Tehran

After a free morning and lunch at the hotel, we will depart for sightseeing around Tehran. First a visit to the Golestan Palace/Museum complex, the former residence of the 19th and early 20th century Qajar Kings of Iran, which now contains several museums including the Marble Throne Room. We will also visit a carpet museum. Dinner will be at a local restaurant serving homemade Iranian food.

Tuesday 8 October

Tehran

Meals: B/L/D

Overnight: Tehran

Today will again be spent in Tehran. A drive north will enable us to see Tehran's modern, trendy suburbs before lunch at a local recreational area. After lunch a visit to Sa'ad Abad Palace, built by the Pahlavi dynasty and now, after the Iranian Revolution, a museum. Then to the National Jewelry Museum home to the largest uncut diamond and the famous Peacock Throne. Tonight, dinner will be at a traditional Iranian local restaurant with typical live music.

Wednesday 9 October

Tehran - Rasht

Meals: B/L/D

Coach: 327km

Overnight: Rasht

This morning we will drive to Rasht, the sophisticated capital of Gilan Province. It is known for its refreshing climate, its beauty and its parks. En route we will drive through the emerald green Gilan hinterland, paddy fields, tea plantations, orangeries and stop to visit the Gilan Rural Heritage Museum where many traditional Gilani cottages have been reassembled in the grounds. This fascinating open-air museum strives to represent the different cultural and architectural areas of Gilan. Lunch may be a picnic and dinner will be in a local restaurant.

Thursday 10 October

Rasht - Tabriz

Meals: B/L/D

Coach: 500km

Overnight: Tabriz

We set off this morning for a long drive to Tabriz with a stop to visit Sheikh Safio-din Ardabili shrine in Ardabil. Long a buffer between empires, Tabriz' historical heritage and Silk Road pedigree is no more evident than in its thriving bazaar, one of the world's best. Situated on a high plateau between Lake Orumiyeh and lofty Mt Sahand, this sprawling city, rich in Azeri culture, with its famous carpets, teahouse *hammams*, and love of music, is a fascinating city to visit.

Friday 11 October

Tabriz

Meals: B/L/D

Overnight: Tabriz

A full day of sightseeing including a visit to the Blue Mosque, the Bazaar and the Azarbaijan Museum. The Blue Mosque was constructed for ruler Jahan Shah in 1465. With its intricate turquoise mosaics, it was one of the most famous buildings of its era. Unfortunately, it was badly damaged in an earthquake in 1773, leaving only the main *iwan* (entrance hall) and Jahan Shah's tomb intact. The Azarbaijan museum has exhibits dating back over 4000 years and a re-weave of the famous 'Ardebil' carpet, said to be one of the best ever made. Lunch and dinner will be at a local restaurant.

Saturday 12 October

Tabriz - Kandovan - Tabriz

Meals: B/L/D

Coach: 55km

Overnight: Tabriz

Today an excursion takes us to the magnificent village of Kandovan where homes are carved inside rocks. Kandovan means "Land of the Unknown Carvers". No-one knows how long people have lived here, nor who first had the idea of carving the soft rock into houses. Some say the houses date from the 12th century, others that they pre-date Islam. The village is known for its cave houses – a population of about 700 live in hollowed-out rocks the shape of witches' hats, like the famous "fairy chimney" formations of Cappadocia in Turkey. An interesting aspect is that the rock acts as an energy efficient material, keeping the houses cool during summer and warm during winter. We will have lunch in a hotel in the village.

Sunday 13 October**Tabriz - Shiraz**

Meals: B/L/D

Flight:

Overnight: Shiraz

In the morning we will be transferred to Tabriz airport for our flight to Shiraz, the home of poets, wine and flowers. The city of Shiraz is one of history's great survivors. Dating back to ancient times, Shiraz has seen its fortunes wax and wane, perhaps more than any other city in Iran, if not the entire Middle East. It has variously served as a local, regional and imperial capital. Thanks in no small part to its relative out-of-the-way position, and the good fortune to be ruled by many wise heads, Shiraz has survived the onslaught of the centuries relatively intact. Because of this it bears the buildings and monuments of many of its past civilizations, including most of the great Muslim dynasties of Persia. Depending on time we may visit Eram Garden before continuing to the tombs of Hafez and Saadi both very famous Iranian poets. Hafez's poems will be recited by our guide.

Monday 14 October**Shiraz**

Meals: B/L/D

Overnight: Shiraz

After breakfast, we will set off on a full day city tour including the Narenjستان Qavam Garden, named for the abundance of sour orange trees. Then to the Masjid Vakil mosque which features a massive gate and the intricate tilework that Iranian mosques are famous for. Perhaps its most memorable feature are the rows and rows of exquisitely carved columns that support the halls and walkways. Nasir-al-Mulk is one of the relatively younger major mosques in Iran. Similar in layout and structure to the Masjid Vakil, it is arguably far more beautiful. The mosque gates boast towers from which the call to prayer is intoned. It is perhaps most famous for the tilework on its ceilings, possibly among the most beautiful anywhere. Next a visit to Imamzadeh Ali-Ebne- Hamze, famous for its eye-catching bulbous Shirazi dome, dazzling Venetian mirror work, stained-glass windows and an intricate, ancient wooden door. Lunch and dinner at local restaurants, will give an opportunity to try delicious Shishlik kebabs.

Tuesday 15 October**Shiraz- Persepolis - Shiraz**

Meals: B/L/D

Overnight: Shiraz

A full day excursion to nearby Persepolis, one of the most important sites of the Ancient World. Persepolis was the ceremonial capital of the Achaemenid kings with remains of the palaces of Darius the Great, Xerxes and Artaxerxes. Here there are famous bas-reliefs depicting kings and courtiers and gift bearing representatives of tributary nations of the Persian Empire. Continue to Naqsh-e Rostam to one of the most spectacular and awe-inspiring ancient sites of the Achaemenid Empire, consisting of the colossal tombs of Persian kings dating back to the first millennium BC. It stands as a lasting memory of a once powerful empire that ruled over a significant portion of the ancient world. Lunch at Lane Tavooos, a restaurant close to Persepolis, before returning to Shiraz in the afternoon.

Wednesday 16 October**Shiraz – Bishapur - Shiraz**

Meals: B/L/D

Overnight: Shiraz

Today we have an excursion to the ruined Sassanian city of Bishapur founded by King Shapur (241-272). We will visit Sassanid Bas reliefs in the Tang-e Chogan gorge. These huge reliefs show scenes such as Shapur's victory over the Roman Emperors; the king and his courtiers and soldiers imitating the Trajan column in Rome. Tang-e means gorge in Persian and Chogan means polo as it is believed that the king and Iranian generals used to play polo in some parts of this gorge.

Thursday 17 October**Shiraz – Pasargadae - Yazd**

Meals: B/L/D

Overnight: Yazd

Leave Shiraz and drive to Pasargadae, the first capital city of the Achaemenids and the site of the tombs and remains of Cyrus the Great (the founder of the Persian Empire), all located in the magnificent Dasht-e-Morghab region. We will then visit the village of a local nomadic tribe, where we will have lunch, before driving to Yazd for the first night of a two night stay.

Friday 18 October**Yazd**

Meals: B/L/D

Overnight: Yazd

Today we take in the splendours of the Zoroastrian capital Yazd, visiting the Fire Temple where the fire has been burning for about 1500 years and the abandoned Towers of Silence (Dakhma) dating back to the 17th century, where until some 40-50 years ago, the dead were carried and left to decompose and be devoured by the birds. There are also many beautiful old houses in Yazd, among them the Dolat-Abad Gardens, the Jame mosque and Mir Chakhmaq façade - a three-storey elaborate façade of perfectly proportioned sunken arched alcoves. It is the largest structure in Iran. There are two very tall minarets in the centre. If we have time we will also visit the old town and different structures of desert architecture such as water reservoirs, wind towers and a water museum.

Saturday 19 October
Yazd - Nain - Isfahan
Meals: B/L/D
Overnight: Isfahan

Drive to the jewel of Safavid Persia, Isfahan, with an en route stop at Meybod to visit the historical complex including Narin Citadel. Then on to Nain, a charming desert town known for its magnificent monuments and famous for high-quality carpets and wool textiles. We will visit the Jame Mosque and later in the village of Mohammadieh, there is a chance to see traditional textile workshops weaving camel cloaks worn by the Moslem clergy in Iran. Continue to Isfahan, the 17th century capital of the Safavids with its tree lined boulevards, Persian gardens and important buildings.

Sunday 20 October
Isfahan
Meals: B/L/D
Overnight: Isfahan

A full day tour of the beautiful city of Isfahan, we visit one of the world's largest and grandest squares. Hemmed on four sides by architectural gems and embracing the formal fountains and gardens at its centre, this square was a busy arena of entertainment and business, exchanged between people from all corners of the world. It was laid out in 1602 under the reign of the Safavid ruler, Shah Abbas the Great, to signal the importance of Isfahan as a capital of a powerful empire. It was designed to showcase the finest jewels of the Safavid empire – the incomparable Masjed-e Shah, the elegant Masjed-e Sheikh Lotfollah and the lavishly decorated Kakh-e Ali Qapu and Qeysarieh Portal. It has changed little since it was built, and at each end the goal posts, used in regular polo games 400 years ago, are still in place. Later we will visit Chehel Sotun Palace, built as a pleasure pavilion and reception hall, using the Achaemenid-inspired *talar* (columnar porch) style. The slender, ribbed wooden pillars of the palace rise to a superb wooden ceiling with crossbeams and exquisite inlay work. Its wooden columns reflected in the surface of the pool give its name 'The Palace of Forty Columns'. In the evening, one of the most pleasant activities is to stroll along the Zayandeh river past the bridges which are illuminated in the early evenings. The walk from the Si-o-se bridge to the Khaju bridge is a popular walk for locals as the bridges have been as much a meeting place as bearers of traffic. The steps in front of the Khaju bridge and arches in the first deck are used to relax and listen to the sound of water.

Monday 21 October
Isfahan
Meals: B/L/D
Overnight: Isfahan

A city tour including the magnificent Jame Mosque, famous as the museum of Islamic architecture, the Armenian Quarter with several churches, and the important Cathedral of Vank. The cathedral was established in 1606, dedicated to the hundreds of thousands of Armenian deportees who were resettled during the Ottoman War. The church's interior is richly decorated and shows the curious mix of styles, Islamic tiles and designs alongside Christian imagery, that characterises many churches in Iran. Tonight, we will enjoy a farewell dinner at our hotel.

Monday 22 October
Isfahan - Dubai
Meals: B/in flight

Enjoy some free time this morning before we transfer to the airport for our early evening flight to Dubai arriving at 10pm. We will spend the night in an airport hotel giving a chance for a few hours' sleep.

Wednesday 23 October
Dubai - Auckland

Catch a mid-morning flight to Auckland, arriving mid-morning on **Thursday 24 October**.

HOW TO SECURE YOUR PLACE ON THIS TOUR

A deposit of \$1,000 is required to secure your place on the tour. When minimum numbers are reached, the tour will become a 'confirmed departure'. At that point we will advise when the full tour payment will be due.

- [Click here](#) to complete the online registration form, pay the \$1,000 deposit and your spot in this tour is secured.
- Or you can complete a paper registration form. You can download one from the website www.calderandlawsonstours.co.nz, or give us a call and we will email or post one to you.

TERMS & CONDITIONS

Can be found on the website www.calderandlawsonstours.co.nz, on the back of the paper registration form or on the summary page when you complete an online registration.

VARIATIONS

This itinerary is Version 2 dated 18/02/2019 and is subject to change. Exchange rate fluctuations may result in a change to the tour price.



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