

November 2010 Tour - Iran

Essential/Ancient Iran and Caspian Sea: Tehran, Yazd, Shiraz, Persepolis, Esfahan, Ramsar, Rasht & Masouleh

November 6 through November 20, 2010 – 14 nights

Price \$3,450.00 per person, double occupancy - Single supplement \$660



DAY 01: November 6 - AMSTERDAM-TEHRAN

Arrival at IKA airport by KLM 433 at 23:15, (the flight has changed and arrives in Tehran at 12:40 a.m. on the 7th) meet and transfer to hotel for overnight (O/N).

DAY 02: November 7 - TEHRAN

Visits in Tehran to include Iran's National Museum (Archaeological Museum only as Islamic Museum is currently under renovation), displaying an authentic collection of pottery, bronze and valuable pieces from millennia B.C until Islamic era. The objects on display have been found from different regions of Iran including Susa, Persepolis, and many other ancient sites; Glass & Ceramics Museum with a beautiful collection of glass and pottery from different periods; also visit to the Carpet Museum, displaying a beautiful collection of old and new Persian carpets and rugs O/N at hotel.

DAY 03: November 8- TEHRAN/SHIRAZ

Morning flight to Shiraz, as available, and spend the rest of the day on visiting some of the famous gardens of this city of "roses and nightingales", including the Eram Garden, the pink tiled 19th-century Nasir-ol-Molk Mosque, the Arg-e-Karim Khan (18th-century citadel), the Madrassa Khan (Theological School), to have interaction with teachers and students, the Qajar-period Narenjestan Garden/House, the very interesting 18th-century Vakil Bazaar of Shiraz, which bustles with everyday shoppers, and the Holy Shrine of Shah-e-Cheragh (not open to non-Moslems and can only be seen from outside). O/N hotel.

DAY 04: November 9 - SHIRAZ/PERSEPOLIS

Full day excursion to Persepolis, one of the most important sites of the Ancient World, the ceremonial capital of the Achaemenid kings with remains of the palaces of Darius the Great, Xerxes and Artaxerxes, and its famous bas-reliefs, depicting kings and courtiers and gift-bearing representatives of tributary nations of the Persian Empire; also visit Naghsh-e-Rostam to see Ka'be-Zardosht (fire temple/sanctuary), and Royal Tombs (also Achaemenid); plus seven magnificent Sassanian rock-reliefs (including Shapur the First's famous victory over Roman Emperor Valerian); return to Shiraz for further visits, including the tombs of Iran's greatest lyric poets, Hafez and Sa'adi, both located in beautiful gardens. O/N hotel.

DAY 05: November 10 - SHIRAZ/YAZD

Drive to Yazd, en route visit Pasargadae, the site of the simple, but impressive tomb, and remains of palaces of Cyrus the Great (the Founder of the Persian Empire), all located in the vast Dasht-e-Morghab, and drive through Abarkuh (a typical desert town), and have tea under the shade of a 4,000-year old Cypress tree; continue to Yazd for O/N stay at hotel.

DAY 06: November 11 - YAZD

Full day sightseeing in Yazd, the center for Iran's small Zoroastrian community, who seeking refuge from the invading Arabs found a safe haven within its fortified walls. On this day you will visit one of the two Zoroastrian abandoned Towers of Silence (Dakhma), dating back to the 18th-century, where until some 40-50 years ago the dead were carried and left to decompose and be devoured by birds; and the active Zoroastrian Fire Temple, the fire of which has been burning for about 1500 years. Among Yazd's Islamic sites is the Friday Mosque (1324 A.D.), with the highest portal and minarets in Iran. Other notable Islamic monuments in the old Fahadan area of Yazd are the Seljuk shrine dedicated to the Twelve Shi'ite Imams; and Ziaieyeh Theological School, 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 an 18th-century feudal hexagonal house. O/N hotel.

DAY 07: November 12 - YAZD/ESFAHAN

Drive to Esfahan, en-route stop over first at the village of Mohamadiye, to see the traditional workshops weaving the camel cloaks worn by the Moslem clergy in Iran; on to Na'in, another charming desert town, half way between Yazd and Esfahan, to visit the 10th century Friday Mosque, and the 17th century Pirnia House/Ethnographic Museum (closed on Mondays), with a walk through the old part of the town; continue to Esfahan for O/N hotel.

DAY 08: November 13 - ESFAHAN

Full day tour of the beautiful city of Esfahan, the 17th century capital of the Safavids, referred to as Nesf-e-Jahan (Half of the World) in Safavid sources, to visit the famous bridges of Shahrestan/Khajou/Sio-se-pol, the Armenian Quarter with several churches, including the important Cathedral of Vank; in the afternoon visit one of the world's grandest squares, the Maidan-e-Naghsh-e-Jahan, with several sites (the Ali-Qapu Palace with its enchanting music rooms and balcony

overlooking the Maidan, from where the Safavid Kings watched polo games, and two of Islamic world's greatest mosques – the Sheikh Lotfollah and the Shah – with magnificent architecture and tilework), finishing with a visit to the Qeisarieh Bazaar with hundreds of shops displaying the arts and handicrafts for which Esfahan is world-famous, O/N hotel.

DAY 09: November 14 - ESFAHAN

Another full day sightseeing of Esfahan to visit the magnificent Friday Mosque, with the famous Uljaitu Mihrab (Prayer Niche) of the Il-Khanid period. The Friday Mosque is considered a museum of a thousand year of Persian religious architecture and is truly one of the world's greatest mosques. Also visit the Harun-e-Velayat Shrine and the Ali Minaret. From here drive to the Chehel Sotun Palace, built by Shah Abbas II in the 17th century; its wooden columns reflected in the surface of the pool give rise to its name 'The Palace of Forty Columns'. Final stop of the day is at the Hasht Behesht pavilion built in 1670 by Shah Solayman and known as the Pavilion of Eight Paradises or the Palace of Nightingales. This small but intricate building is set amongst tree-lined alleys, a reflecting pool and water rills. O/N hotel.

DAY 10: November 15 - ESFAHAN/TEHRAN

Morning drive to Tehran, en-route visit the village of Abyaneh, hidden in Karkas Mountains, an Iranian Cultural Heritage site, and a charming traditional village, and enjoy walking in this ancient village which was one of the last places in Iran which surrendered to Islam. The people of Abyaneh have preserved their ancient culture and traditions over the centuries, and still wear their traditional colourful dress; on to Kashan to visit the historical garden of Fin which was first planted during the Safavid period and kept alive with water from the nearby Sulaimanieh Spring. This beautiful garden was expanded by the Zand and Qajar monarchs, with many open pavilions added. You will also visit a fine example of a 19th century merchant residence known as Taba-Tabai House with its beautiful stucco dome and inlaid mirror work, with some of the best examples of existing "badgirs" (wind-catchers), on to Tehran, and drive by the Mausoleum of Imam Khomeini, overnight stay at hotel.

DAY 11: November 16 - TEHRAN/RAMSAR

Drive to Ramsar, the old 'Riviera' of Iran, via scenic mountainous Chalus Road. You will enjoy the beauties of Alborz Mountains as you drive towards Chalus. The road takes you up to the heights of the Alborz Range, and then down to the Caspian Sea where you will take the coastal road to Ramsar. All along the coastal road there are rice paddies and lush green forests. O/N hotel.

DAY 12: November 17 - RAMSAR/RASHT

Drive to Rasht, via small Caspian towns and villages, visit the local fish and vegetable markets; and continue on excursion to visit the traditional and ancient village of Massuleh, one of the oldest and longest inhabited villages in Iran and pronounced as a heritage site by the Iranian Cultural Heritage Organization; in this village the roads winding up to the higher stages are over the roof tops of houses where local women are busy knitting colourful dolls and socks. Return to Rasht for O/N stay.

DAY 13: November 18 - RASHT/TEHRAN

Drive to Tehran via Qazvin, and visit the shrine of Shahzadeh Hussain, son of the Eighth Imam of Shiites, dating from early Safavid period. The shrine has undergone major restorations. Also visit the Friday Mosque of Qazvin, dating from the Seljuk era with further expansion and decoration in the Safavid and Qajar eras. Continue to Tehran for O/N stay.

DAY 14: November 19 - TEHRAN

Visit the Golestan Palace/Museum Complex, the former residence of the 19th early 20th century Qajar Kings of Iran, with several museums including the Marble Throne Room Also visit the fabulous State's Jewels Museum, housed in the vaults of the Central Bank of Iran, displaying the most dazzling and priceless collection of jewels and gems in the world. In the afternoon visit the former residence of the last Royal Family of Iran at Sa'adabad Palace/Museum Complex, in north Tehran, where several palaces/museums, including the White and Green Palaces, are visited. You can also visit the nearby local Tajrish fruit and vegetable market. Return to the hotel for overnight stay.

DAY 15: November 20 - TEHRAN-AMSTERDAM

Transfer to IKA airport for departure flight by KLM434 at 02:05.

The price includes: accommodation in 4-5 star hotels, two meals a day at best available restaurants or hotels, airfare within Iran, all entrance fees to museums, all pickups, transfers, transportation in air conditioned coach, excellent English speaking national and local guides, tips for all included meals & visa approvals in Iran.

Not included: Visa fee: \$140, International air, one meal per day, personal expenses, telephone calls, room service, internet, laundry, dry cleaning, travel insurance, etc

Single supplement: \$660

Deposit and Final Payment: Registration requires a \$500 non-refundable deposit. The balance is due sixty days prior to the departure date. You can pay by check or credit cards. The registration fee would be refunded if the tour is cancelled.

To register please call or send an email to abdi@solhtours.com.