

United Nations Association – Greater Seattle Chapter



Some members of UNA May 2009 delegation with university students in Esfahan

Journey to Iran/Persia An educational tour in support of peace and understanding

The United Nations Association of Greater Seattle is pleased to announce a second educational tour to Iran, with departure on April 4, 2010 and return on April 17. This tour is a follow up to our successful chapter trip to Iran in May 2009 and collaboration with well-known travel guru and author Rick Steves on his trip to Iran, aired on PBS stations around the nation.

The tour is open to members of UNA-USA chapters around the United States. Participants will have the opportunity to learn more about Iran, its history, culture, and peoples through a series of visits to Iranian universities, great historic and cultural monuments and rural villages. On our return to America, participants will be expected to communicate their experiences in both word and pictures to audiences in their communities.

The tour will be led by Mr. Abdi Sami, an Iranian American film industry executive and filmmaker who led the chapter tour in 2009 and accompanied Rick Steves on his visit to Iran as Associate Producer. The tour will be limited to a maximum of 25 persons in order to provide a small group atmosphere.



Grand Square – Esfahan



Persepolis, Capital of Persia – 2500 BC

Itinerary:

The itinerary may be modified depending on meeting schedules in Iran.

DAY 01: AMSTERDAM-TEHRAN - Arrival at IKA airport by KL 433 at 23:15, meet and transfer to hotel for overnight (O/N).

DAY 02: 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: TEHRAN-SHIRAZ - Morning flight to Shiraz; transfer to hotel for check in. Afternoon visits to the tombs of Iran's greatest lyric poets, Hafez and Sa'adi, both located in beautiful gardens, also visit the extensive and exotic Vakil Bazaar of Shiraz; O/N hotel.

DAY 04: 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); and Naghsh-e-Rajab, a nearby grotto with several more Sassanian reliefs; return to Shiraz for O/N stay at hotel.

DAY 05: SHIRAZ - Full day city tour of Shiraz to visit 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, and the Holy Shrine of Shah-e-Cheragh (not open to non-Moslems and can only be seen from outside). O/N hotel.

DAY 06: 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 07: 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 50-60 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 are the Friday Mosque (1324 A.D.) with the highest portal and minarets in Iran and the Mirchachmagh 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; and Ziaieyeh Theological School, known as Zendan-e-Eskander or Alexandar'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 08: 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 09: 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 10: 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 years 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. The small but intricate building is set amongst tree-lined alleys, a reflecting pool and water rills. Return to Maidan for further visit to the Bazaar and handicraft shops around the Maidan. O/N hotel.

DAY 11: ESFAHAN-ABYANEH - Morning drive to Abyaneh, en-route stop over at the charming town of Natanz to visit a beautiful Islamic Complex (Friday Mosque/Monastery/Tomb of Sheikh Abdol Samad Esfahani), on to 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; O/N at hotel.

DAY 12: ABYANEH-KASHAN-TEHRAN - Drive to Tehran, via 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 13: 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 14: TEHRAN-AMSTERDAM - Transfer to IKA airport for departure flight by KL434 at 02:05.

Cost \$3,250 - Single supplement: \$620

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 guides, driver, tips for all included meals & visa approvals in Iran.

*In Abyaneh the accommodation would be in a 3 star hotel.

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

Economy class air travel may vary slightly depending on departure city. Based on rates from Seattle, we expect the cost to be about \$1,500.00 return, including an overnight stop in Amsterdam. Overnight Amsterdam hotel room not included. Certain cancellation fees may apply. The airfare will be directly payable to our designated travel agent in Seattle.

Travel to and from Iran- Travel will be by Northwest/KLM. This carrier has been chosen because of reliability, cost, and availability of service from U.S. departure cities via Amsterdam, a pleasant and convenient airport with good hotels within walking distance of the terminal and convenient rail service to downtown. Members will all travel together from Amsterdam to Tehran and will be met as a group at the Tehran airport.

To learn more about Iran and some of what the tour will offer, please look at the following websites: www.solhtours.com

Rick Steves’ website on Iran – this page includes photos and videos of Rick’s trip to Iran. <http://www.ricksteves.com/iran/>

Abdi Sami’s photos essay in Yes Magazine tells the story of his trip to Iran with Rick Steves: <http://www.yesmagazine.org/article.asp?ID=2759>

Terms and conditions

Eligibility- All travelers must be current members of UNA-USA. Individuals who wish to participate and are not members may join for a \$40 membership fee paid to UNA-USA, 801 Second Avenue, New York City, NY 10017—Note *Membership dues* on the check, or sign up online at www.unausa.org, or join the Seattle chapter online at www.unaseattle.org. **Those interested in participating should first contact Abdi Sami at abdi@solhtours.com, giving a short description of their interest and a telephone number where they may be reached.**

Deposits and final payment- Registration must be accompanied by a \$500.00 deposit payable directly to Solh Tours. Upon receipt of deposit, a visa application form will be sent by e-mail, which must be filled out and returned to Solh Tours immediately.

Travel insurance is the responsibility of the traveler and is available at reasonable cost. For further information please see www.solhtours.com

Full payment to Solh Tours is due sixty days prior to departure. A minimum donation of \$100 payable to UNA Seattle is also required at that time. **If UNA Seattle/Solh Tours are forced to cancel the trip because of unforeseen circumstances, a full refund will be provided. Otherwise the deposit is non-refundable.** 50% of your tour price will be refunded if you cancel 45 to 59 days prior to departure. 25% of your tour price will be refunded if you cancel 20 to 44 days prior to departure. No refunds if you cancel 19 days or less prior to departure.

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www.unaseattle.org (calendar, newsletters, donate/join/renew)

UNA-USA is a member of the World Federation of United Nations Associations (WFUNA). Chapters are encouraged to engage with the UN and UNAs in other parts of the world through immersion in their cultural milieu.

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