

SURFIRAN

DISCOVER PERSIA IN IRAN

IRAN 15-DAY TOUR



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 **SURFIRAN**
TRAVEL BEYOND YOUR WORLD

OVERVIEW

TRIP HIGHLIGHTS & ITINERARY



Starting in Tehran by a comfortable couch, you will journey through beautiful landscapes and some of the world's oldest archaeological sites, arid mountains, and rural villages. You will learn about the traditions and cultures of a land whose influence felt for thousands of years. Welcome to the once-forbidden land of Persia.

On this trip, we will explore the beautiful cities of **Tehran**, **Shiraz**, **Yazd**, **Meybod**, **Naein**, **Isfahan**, **Kashan**, and will uncover Persian history at the impressive Persepolis; though, the real highlight of any trip to Iran is meeting the locals, arguably the friendliest and most hospitable people on earth who are always ready to welcome visitors with a smile.

TRAVEL ITINERARY

DAY 1: TEHRAN

After arriving at Imam Khomeini International Airport (IKA) in Tehran, our representative will meet and greet you at the airport. The local representative will transfer you to your hotel to rest.

ACCOMMODATION:

- Hally hotel (hallyhotel.com/en) or a similar one in Tehran

DAY 2: TEHRAN

This morning, we will take you to a World Heritage Site, the lavish **Golestan Palace**. Built during the Qajar Dynasty, that rose to power in the late 1700s, this fabulous walled complex is centered on a landscaped garden with tranquil pools. Many of the elements you'll admire today, date to the 19th century when local Qajari architects and artisans were looking to integrate traditional Persian style with elements of Western and Russian origin. The palace buildings are among the oldest in modern Tehran and they are still regarded as a crowning achievement of the Qajar era.

Then, we will walk around **Tehran Bazaar**.

In the afternoon, you will visit **National Museum of Iran**, where you can see fabulous historical items from 5000 BC to the advent of Islam in Iran which shows a brief history of our land.

We will also visit the **Carpet Museum** of Iran, home to a dazzling collection of Persian carpets collected from around the country and representing centuries of extraordinary art and skill.

ACCOMMODATION:

- Hally hotel (hallyhotel.com/en) or a similar one in Tehran

DAY 3: TEHRAN

Today, we will take you to a lovely park-like setting to visit the **Sa'd Abad Palace**. This was the coronation and marriage palace of the **Pahlavi Dynasty** - and the residence from which the last Shah of Iran. Now a museum, its extensive collection includes period furnishings and décor, and even the personal effects of the last Shah. Our guests also enjoy an exclusive tour through an intimate gallery dedicated to the 20th-century art collection of Iran's last Empress.

Then, we will visit **Tajrish bazaar and Emamzadeh Saleh Mausoleum**. They are located in the northern part of Tehran.

Afterwards, we will go to **Darband**. Darband is an old village in Shemiran. This is 1700 meters above the sea level, and is one of the main starting routes taken by mountaineers for reaching the central Alborz Range. This place has many modern and traditional cafes and restaurants, located both indoors and outdoors, we will have a delicious lunch in one of them.

Later, you will visit **Nature Bridge**. Cross Tabiat Bridge, an award-winning foot bridge designed by local architect Leila Araghian. Completed in 2014, the structure spans 270 m (890 ft) and takes pedestrians from one public park to another across the Shahid Modarres Avenue. Take a stroll on the imposing steel-and-concrete structure, equipped with benches for resting, and enjoy the view of the busy highway and the lush green parks it connects.

ACCOMMODATION:

- Hally hotel (hallyhotel.com/en) or a similar one in Tehran

DAY 4: TEHRAN – KASHAN 2 H 42 MIN (244 KM)

Leaving Tehran behind, we'll travel south to Kashan, a town originally famous for its textiles and ceramic production, but now better known for **Fin Garden** and its extensive **bazaar** and **hamams**.

Fin Garden (A UNESCO World Heritage Site) is our first stop; a relaxing and visually impressive Persian garden with water channels all passing through a central pavilion. There is also the chance to buy some rose water, a local specialty, outside of the site.

Then, you will visit **Boroujerdi Traditional House**. It was built about 130 years ago in reign of Qajar dynasty (1857) by Iranian famous architect Ustad Ali Maryam. The owner was Haj Seyed Hasan Natanzi, a well-known merchant who mostly dealt with people of Boroujerd city. That's why the house is known as Boroujerd's House.

Afterwards, we will visit the bazaar area, a widespread complex filled with **hamams** and **mosques**; one hamam has been converted to a traditional teahouse where we will stop for those who need a break from shopping.

ACCOMMODATION:

- Negin traditional house (neginhouse.ir/en-us/) or a similar one in Kashan

DAY 5: KASHAN – ABYANEH – ISFAHAN 3 H 32 MIN (269 KM)

Leaving Kashan behind, your first stop this morning will be in **Abyaneh village**. Abyaneh Village is known as the Red Village because of its red soil and houses. The houses of Abyaneh bear an ancient architectural style, featured by the use of clay as the construction material and latticed windows and wooden doors.

Your overland journey continues in Isfahan. As the 17th-century capital of the Safavid Empire, Isfahan was one of the world's greatest cities— architecturally striking, wealthy beyond imagine, and politically powerful with Europeans, Ottomans, Indians and Chinese coming to its court— the heart of a vast Persian Empire that stretched from the Euphrates River in present-day Iraq to the Oxus River in Afghanistan. Indeed, its grandeur inspired the rhyming proverb, Isfahan nesf e jahan (Isfahan is half of the World).

Together with your expert guide, you will begin your exploration of the city by visiting some of the centuries-old, still elegant bridges that span Zayandeh River. The 14th-century **Shahrestan Bridge**, for example, evokes the greatest aqueducts of ancient Rome and is the oldest bridge in Iran. Other famous bridges on Zayandeh River are **Sio-ce-pol** and **Khaju**. There are sluice gates below the bridge to let the water runoff Zayandeh River in the spring, and there are beautiful stony archways above each gate. These archways provide a great acoustic place for every man who wants to sing. You can always find a man or a group of men singing under the bridge. The songs are usually about betrayal or unrequited love. You have the chance to chat with these men and listen to their songs.

ACCOMMODATION:

- Setareh hotel (setarehhotel.com) or a similar one in Isfahan

DAY 6: ISFAHAN

Your exploration continues in **Imam Square**. This 17th-century site is one of the largest public spaces in the world. Here in the square, you'll visit the 17th-century **Shah Mosque**, revered as a masterpiece of Islamic architecture and easily recognized by its magnificent tile-work and soaring cupola and minarets. You will also visit **Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque**, also known as the Ladies Mosque, as it was built for the Shah's harem, renowned for brightly colored domed ceiling, where the light creates the image of a peacock. In the **Ali Qapu Palace**, you'll marvel at its beautiful music rooms and the balconies where Safavid kings would sit to enjoy the polo matches unfolding in the square below. You'll end your exploration of the square by visiting the **Qeisarieh Bazaar**. With hundreds of local vendors that specialize in traditional arts and crafts, it's a wonderful place to shop for pottery, enamel, jewelry and delicately inlaid board games.

Next up is **Chehel Sotun Palace**. Set in a landscaped and forested park in front of a tranquil reflecting pool, this graceful pavilion was built by Shah Abbas II for entertainment and court receptions. Entering through a portico with twenty slender wooden columns, you'll discover soaring halls embellished with frescoes, paintings and mosaics; the Hall of Mirrors is especially breathtaking!

The last to visit today is **Mount Sofo** in the south of the city. At this place, you have the chance to see the whole city altogether. You can have a tea or a coffee at one of the cafes or even dine in one of the restaurants.

ACCOMMODATION:

- Setareh hotel (setarehhotel.com) or a similar one in Isfahan

DAY 7: ISFAHAN

Continue your exploration in Isfahan at a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Simple at first glance but wondrous in its rich detail and bold design, the **Masjed-e Jame** is another masterpiece of Iranian architecture, covering nearly 5 acres in the heart of this historical city. This is one of the oldest congregational mosques of the country, and its construction and embellishment over the past twelve centuries illustrate a number of important periods in Islamic architecture.

In the city's Armenian quarter, you'll delve more deeply into the region's complex history as you will visit several churches including the 17th-century **Vank Cathedral** with its lavishly decorated interior and unique blend of Islamic and European architectural elements.

In the same quarter, we will also visit **the Music Museum** where you will find a collection of local and national Iranian instruments.

In the afternoon, we will visit **Hasht Behesht Palace and Garden**. At this octagonal palace, you can see gangs of retired men who pass their free time chatting with the visitors.

ACCOMMODATION:

- Setareh hotel (setarehhotel.com) or a similar one in Isfahan

DAY 8: ISFAHAN – NAEIN – FARAHZAD 5 H 17 MIN (436 KM)

Leaving Isfahan behind, your first stop this morning will be in **Na'in**, an ancient community with origins dating back to the 8th century. We will visit **the Jame mosque of Naien**.

We'll continue our journey to **Farahzad village** which is beautifully located on the edge of the sand desert and makes your stay especial since most other places in that region have some distance from the real desert. In that place, you'll have the chance to visit the historic villages and stay with local people, enjoy their homemade food, become familiar with their customs and way of living.

ACCOMMODATION:

- Barandaz Lodge (Guest House)

DAY 9: MESR DESERT – GARMEH 1 H 21 MIN (88 KM)

Explore **Mesr Desert** and **Garmeh**.

ACCOMMODATION:

- Garmeh (Local Guest House)

DAY 10: GARMEH – KHARANAGH – MEYBOD – YAZD 3 H 42 MIN (298 KM)

Leaving Garmeh behind, we will have a short stop to visit **Kharanagh old town** and a single-minaret mosque and Kharanaq castle. Winding alleys are the wonders of this castle which were used to surprise bandits.

Your overland journey continues to the small town of **Meybod**, where your first impression might be its striking monochromatic architecture of desert brick. But set along an ancient trade route, Meybod also offers a number of fascinating sites to visit including its **caravanserai**. Built in typical Safavid style, this ancient desert inn features verandahs, shaded passageways, and nearly 100 rooms— some of which are now used as artisan workshops. At the local icehouse, you'll learn about the thick-clay construction and subterranean chamber that allowed local residents to have ice and food storage before refrigeration— even during the intense desert heat of summer!

Tonight's dinner in a local restaurant offers a chance to experience daily Iranian life in a city that's smaller than Tehran or Isfahan. The ambience is a bit more laid back and the residents may seem a bit more reserved. But, you'll find them warm, friendly and eager to meet tourists.

ACCOMMODATION:

- Fazeli hotel (fazelihotel.com) or a similar one in Yazd

DAY 11: YAZD

Yazd is one of the oldest continuously inhabited towns of Iran. Its silhouette punctuated by minarets and the ingeniously-designed wind towers that capture desert breezes to cool homes during the hot summer months. Yazd is also the center of Iran's **Zoroastrian community**, which is where you'll begin the day's sightseeing.

At the **Tower of Silence**, you'll learn about one of the traditions of this ancient pre-Islamic religion. Until the mid-1900s, the dead were transported to this tower where they were left to decompose and be devoured by birds. Zoroastrian tradition considers a deceased body to be "unclean" and this process of excarnation prevents contact with either fire or earth— both of which are considered to be sacred.

At the still-active **Zoroastrian Fire Temple**, you will see a flame that is said to have been burning for the past 1,500 years. It's an important pilgrimage site for the faithful and here our expert guide will offer additional insight into one of the world's oldest monotheistic religions.

In **Amir Chakhmaq Square**, you'll see a very impressive **Hussainiya**— a congregation hall for Shia commemoration ceremonies. With three tiers of recessed alcoves, all perfectly proportioned, its facade is one of the city's most photographed landmarks.

The next place to visit is the **Friday Mosque**, built in 1324, where you can gaze upon the tallest minarets in the country.

Among the many other historic sites to be seen in Yazd are beautiful old homes and the **Dowlat Abad Garden**. Standing by the garden's long reflecting pool, you'll be shaded by ancient cypress trees. Ahead of you is an 18th-century hexagonal pavilion with a beautiful stained glass window and a graceful wind tower— the tallest in Iran. All around are flowering fruit trees and other ornamental plants and trees.

ACCOMMODATION:

- Fazeli hotel (fazelihotel.com) or a similar one in Yazd

DAY 12: YAZD – SHIRAZ 5 H 17 MIN (449 KM)

Today, we have a full day of driving to reach our destination of **Shiraz**; it is a good idea to stock up on locally bought and easily found dates and pistachio nuts for the journey.

First, you will visit **Pasargadae**, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, **the Tomb of Cyrus the Great** and former capital of the Achaemenid Empire. We will spend some time exploring the site and though not as striking as Persepolis, there is a great viewpoint where we can look over the site and the surrounding area.

From here, we will drive a couple of miles to **Naqsh-e-Rustam**, the **Necropolis** where Darius and his successors are buried. Carved into the side of a cliff, the site is extraordinary in its magnitude and sheer ambition and does not disappoint even after the impressive Persepolis.

Then, we will have some stop on our way to visit **the Legendary City of Persepolis**, the former capital of Darius the Great which was founded in 512 BC. There was no more impressive construction in the ancient world than Persepolis, except perhaps the Karnak in Egypt. Darius built the terrace, *Apadana* (great audience hall), *Tachana* (a palace), and *the Monumental Staircases*; his son, Xerxes, added *the Harem and the Hall of 100 Columns*. Alexander the Great entered Persepolis in January 330 BC and then committed an uncharacteristic act of wanton destruction that still mystifies historians today, burning the mighty city to the ground. Though a shadow of its former self, the soaring pillars, terraces and sculptures of Persepolis still remain, but probably most impressive are the bas reliefs which line the site, telling the story of ancient governors and kings that came to Persepolis to pay tribute to the Persian Emperors.

Continue to Shiraz and check into the hotel.

ACCOMMODATION:

- Forough hotel or a similar one in Shiraz

DAY 13: SHIRAZ

After breakfast, you will visit **Nasir-al-Mulk Mosque** (Pink Mosque) which is few steps far from Vakil Bazaar. It was built at Mirza Hassan Ali Nasir-al Mulk's command (one of the lords of the Qajar Dynasty); it took 12 years to complete it in 1888. Its interior reveals a magnificent masterpiece of design with stunning colors. This is a space where light and worship intertwine. The mosque comes to life with the sunrise and the colors dance throughout the day like whirling Dervishes. It reflects on the ground, walls, the arches and the towering spires. It even reflects on the visitors as if a colorful ball is hit by the first sun ray and has exploded into thousands of butterflies all around.

Continue your exploration in Shiraz at the beautiful orange-scented **Narenjestan Garden**, laid out in the 19th century during the Qajar Dynasty.

Then, you will visit **Karim Khan Citadel** which was built during the Zand Dynasty.

You'll have time to explore and shop in the bustling **Vakil Bazaar**, home to hundreds of stores, beautiful courtyards, and even an ancient caravanserai.

ACCOMMODATION:

- Forough hotel or a similar one in Shiraz

DAY 14: SHIRAZ – TEHRAN (FLIGHT) 1 H 20 MIN

After breakfast, we will continue our exploration of the city. Shiraz is famous for its gardens and we'll visit **Eram Garden** with its aromatic myrtles, beautiful flowers, fruit trees, and towering cypresses (one of which is said to be 3,000 years old).

Then, we will visit **the Shrine of Ali Ebne Hamzeh**. Built in the 19th century over the tomb of Emir Ali, a nephew of Shah Cheragh who also died in Shiraz while en route to Khorasan to help Imam Reza, this shrine is the latest of several earlier incarnations destroyed by earthquakes.

You will end your day on a tranquil note in the lovely **garden-tomb of Sa'di** and **garden-tomb of Hafez**, two of our most outstanding poets to feel the taste of Persian Literature. Hafez is one of the great poets who has impressed everyone with his mastery. His poems give us a special feeling and the peace in his tomb is really outstanding. Sa'di is a poet, philosopher and mystic who is known as the father of alternative tourism. About seven centuries ago, he travelled to different countries and cities. Then, he collected all his experiences in verses and rhymed prose in two books named Boustan and Golestan. These two books give you lots of inspiration and information. We will get a chance to pay homage to tombs of these great poets.

ACCOMMODATION:

- Hally hotel (hallyhotel.com/en) or a similar one in Tehran

DAY 15: TEHRAN (DEPARTURE)

Our representative will transfer you to Imam Khomeini International Airport according to your flight time.

PAYMENTS

- Paying at least 30% of the whole price will show your confirmation and then we are able to book hotels for you and you can pay the rest of amount one month before your arrival or you can pay it in cash in Iran.
- Due to sanctions against Iran, unfortunately, we are not able to accept credit cards, instead, you can transfer the amount to the account of our business partner in Malaysia.
- If the bank asks for the reason of payment (if any) just write travel and avoid to write "Travel to Iran" as sometimes it takes a couple of weeks to double check by corresponding banks.

PASSENGER CANCELLATION FEES

If you cancel your tour for any reason including medical or personal reasons, cancellation fees will apply. Cancellation fee is applicable based on when we receive your cancellation request (see below). The remainder will be refunded within 15 working days.

CANCELLATION FEE BASED ON TIME OF CANCELLATION

- 40-50 days before departure – 30% of the tour price.
- 30-40 days before departure- 50% of the tour price.
- Less than 30 days departure – 100% of the tour price.

Quality Standards of the Accommodations

The local star ratings differ from international standards, where 4-star hotels are similar to 3-star ones in European countries.

ESSENTIAL TRIP INFORMATION

Please note that travelers cannot use debit or credit cards while in Iran. You will need to bring all the money you will need for your entire trip with you. Please read through the money matters section of your essential trip information for further details.

EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION

While we always endeavor to provide the best possible holiday experience, due to the nature of travel and the areas we visit sometimes things can and do go wrong. Should any issue occur while you are on your trip please contact your guide or contact person directly.

In case of an emergency, you can reach us on the numbers below.

SURFIRAN OFFICE:

+98 21 8884 3831 (Sunday to Thursday from 8:30 AM to 6:30 PM. Fridays and Saturdays weekend.)