

*The Society for Asian Art Presents:
Through the Pishtaq: **
Art, Architecture and Culture of Persia
Led by Dr. Keelan Overton
April 22 - May 9, 2018*



Ancient Persia has been the seat of many civilizations and many of Iran's achievements have contributed to our modern world. Most of the country's archaeological gems have been well preserved and portray a rich historical heritage. Join this journey to Iran accompanied by scholar Keelan Overton as well as an outstanding local Iranian guide. Uncover the many layers of Iranian culture, mores, religion, and history as you attempt to understand the unique character of the country. Explore colorful cities, exotic bazaars, ancient baths, and rich ruins. Marvel at ancient monuments and exquisitely tiled mosques. Stroll across plazas that remain much the same as they were in medieval times. Learn about ancient Persian poetry, art, architecture, science, and history – and how past achievements have shaped a modern world. Discussions and lectures will enrich the site visits.

****Formal Gateway *World Heritage Site**

Sun-Mon, April 22/23 USA to Tehran

Depart the US for the flight to **Tehran** arriving the next day late evening and meet, assist and transfer to *Espinas Hotel* or similar for check in and overnight.

Tuesday, April 24 Tehran

After a late breakfast, visit some of Tehran's major museums, including **Iran's National Museum Complex (Museum of Ancient Iran and Museum of Islamic Era)** displaying a rare and spectacular collection of pre-historic and ancient artifacts with pottery dating back to 6th -7th century BCE. Then visit **Reza Abbasi Museum** - the collections on display belong to the 2nd millennium BCE to the early 20th century, corresponding to the end of Qajar period. The displays are arranged chronologically, so visitors have a chance to observe the development of art, culture and technology during this time interval. After the museum, take a walk in northern Tehran, culminating in *Shandiz Mashhad Restaurant* for a traditional lamb dinner. Return to your hotel for overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Wednesday, April 25 Varamin & Ray

Take an excursion to **Shahr-e-Ray**, an archaeological site Cheshmeh Ali and Seljuk Toghrol Tower nearby. In **Varamin**, visit the 14-century Friday Mosque, the Shrine of Imamzada Yahya and the 12th c. Ala al-Din Tomb Tower. Picnic lunch will be provided. Early afternoon return to hotel for some free time, followed by dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Thursday, April 26 Tehran to Hamadan

Drive to **Hamadan** via Qazvin. In Qazvin visit the **holy shrine of Shahzadeh Hossein**, son of the 8th Shiite Imam, dating from early Safavid period. Continue to Hamadan, the capital of the Median Empire in the 7th century B.C.E. and the summer capital of the Achaemenid kings in the 5th century B.C.E. Visits include **Ganjnameh**, the inscriptions by Darius I, and his son, Xerxes, carved on the rocks of the mountain; the **Tomb of Esther & Mordechai**, a major Jewish pilgrimage center; the 12th century **Gonbad-e Alavian** domed tomb, plus the tomb of **Avicenna**, Iran's celebrated philosopher/scientist/physician, whose prescriptions are still used. See the **Stone Lion**, an intriguing, sculpture believed to date from the Hellenistic Period when Alexander invaded Iran. Stay in Hamadan for dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Friday, April 27 Hamadan to Kermanshah

Drive to **Kermanshah**, via Kangavar, a small town dating back to 200 BCE. Visit the **Temple of Anahita**, goddess of water and fertility. Continue to **Bisotun***; see texts that helped in the deciphering of the cuneiform script. The 400 foot high inscription carved into the cliff side has been recently restored. On arrival in Kermanshah visit the important Sassanian reliefs at **Taq-e-Bostan**, depicting royal hunting scenes and the investiture of the Sassanian kings. Transfer to your hotel for check in, dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Saturday, April 28 Kermanshah

After breakfast, drive to Malayer to visit *Tepe Nush-e-Jan*, the ancient Iron Age settlement. Then head to *Takieh Mo'aven ol-Molk*. Distinctively Shiite, Hosseiniehs are shrines where plays are acted out during the Islamic month of Moharram, commemorating the martyrdom of Imam Hossein at Karbala (AD 680). The finest of these theatres is the *Takieh Mo'aven ol-Molk*. Return to your hotel for dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Sunday, April 29 Kermanshah to Shiraz

Transfer to the airport for your flight to Shiraz. Upon arrival transfer to your hotel for check in, dinner and overnight. Enjoy the rest of the day at leisure. **(B,L,D)**

Monday, April 30 Shiraz (Persepolis)

Full Day exploring **Persepolis***, the magnificent 6th - 8th c. ceremonial capital city of the Achaemenids. Visit the rock-cut tombs of Persian kings at **Naqsh-e Rostam** and the Sassanian cliff reliefs at **Naqsh-e Rostam**. Return to your hotel in Shiraz for dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Tuesday, May 01 Shiraz

Explore **Shiraz**, known as the city of "Roses and Nightingales" for its famous gardens. Visit the **Pars Museum**, the pink-tiled 19th century **Mosque of Nasir-ol-Molk**, the **Qajar Narenjestan Garden and House**, the **Vakil Complex** and the **Bazaar of Shiraz**. Visit the 9th century **Friday Atigh mosque**, the most interesting and oldest of the buildings in Shiraz. After lunch visit a nomadic carpet workshop/gallery to shop or just learn about tribal rugs. Return to the hotel for dinner and overnight. (B,L,D)

Wednesday, May 02 Shiraz to Yasuj

After breakfast, drive via the beautiful Zagros Mountains to **Yasuj**, the center for Qashqai and Boyer-Ahmadi nomads. The nomads migrate from the southern areas to spend the spring and summer in open pastures of Zagros to graze their herds. Upon arrival in Yasuj transfer to your hotel for check in and overnight. (B,L,D)

Thursday, May 03 Yasuj to Isfahan

Drive north through the **Zagros Mountains** where the vistas are gorgeous. We will make many photo stops, passing several of the cascades that gives this region the nickname, "The Land of Waterfalls." The road to Isfahan will take you through the town of Semrom around which Qashqais settle during the summer. Check-in at **Abbasi Hotel** for dinner and overnight. (B,L,D)

Friday, May 04 Isfahan

Full day tour of the beautiful city of **Isfahan**, the 17th century capital of the Safavids, referred to as **Nesf-e Jahan** (Half of the World) in Safavid sources. Visit the famous bridges of **Shahrestan/Khaju/Sio-se-pol**; the Armenian Quarter with several churches, including the Vank Cathedral and possibly an Armenian house with exceptional wall paintings. 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 room and balcony overlooking the Maidan; the **Shah Mosque***, one of the world's greatest mosques; and the architecturally exquisite **Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque***. (B,L,D)

Saturday, May 05 Isfahan

Another full day sightseeing of Isfahan. Visit the magnificent **Masjed-e Jame Mosque***, with the famous **Oljaitu Mihrab** (Prayer Niche) of the Il-Khanid period. This mosque is considered a museum of a thousand years of Persian religious architecture. 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 inspired its name "**The Palace of Forty Columns**". Final stop of the day is at the **Hasht Behesht pavilion** built in 1670 by Shah Soleiman and known as the Pavilion of Eight Paradises or the Palace of Nightingales. This small gem is set amongst tree-lined alleys, a reflecting pool and water rills. Return to the Maidan to visit the Qeisarieh Bazaar with hundreds of shops displaying the arts and handicrafts for which Isfahan is world-famous. (B,L,D)

Sunday, May 06 Isfahan

After breakfast, visit the newly-restored **Hammam-e Ali Gholi Agha**, dating to late Safavid period, with magnificent tiles and paintings, now an ethnographic museum displaying customs and rituals of traditional bathhouses; the **Darb-e Imam shrine complex** and the Seljuk **Chehel Dokhtar Minaret**, adorned with brick work and Kufic inscriptions. Also visit the Seljuk **Sarban Minaret**, a 54 m tall minaret and the nearby **Madrassa-i Imami**. In the afternoon, return to the Maidan for a walk and interaction with local people (B,L,D)

Monday, May 07 Isfahan to Kashan

Drive to the charming desert town of Natanz to visit the **Mosque, Monastery and Tomb complex of Sheikh Abdolsamad**. Take a tea-break under the shade of a 500-year old plane tree. Visit rose cultivation and processing in Qamsar. Celebrate with a *special farewell dinner* and overnight at *Manouchehri House* or similar. (B,L,D)

Tuesday, May 08 Kashan to Tehran

Visit **Bagh-e Fin*** (16th century gardens). Depart Kashan for Tehran, stopping along the way to visit the **Shrine of Fatima Masumeh** in Qom, the second most holy shrine in Iran. Continue to Tehran and on arrival check-in at Novotel Airport Hotel. Dinner & overnight. (B,L,D)

Wednesday, May 09 Tehran to USA

Very early morning, walk to the terminal for the flight returning to the US.

** Formal Gateway

"We (STS) reserve the right to change hotels, restaurants, airlines or the order of activities if/as needed."

Tour cost per person in double occupancy

Land Package: \$5,995.00

Single Supplement: \$1,200.00



Price based on a minimum of 15 participants and maximum of 20 participants

Trip Grade: II

Lodging Level: ★★★★★

Tour includes:

- Deluxe and First class properties in most cities and one or two hotels superior tourist class in smaller towns for a few nights.
- All meals (Full-board) as specified in the itinerary: (B-breakfast, L-lunch and D-dinner).
- All tours as per itinerary including entrance fees and high qualified English speaking guide throughout the trip.
- Transfers/transportation by large comfortable modern A/C vehicle during the whole tour.
- A bottle of mineral water per passenger per day on touring days plus juice, coffee and tea on board the bus.
- All local taxes and service charges on included items.
- Tipping to guide, drivers, porters, hotel and restaurant staff.
- Internal flights in Iran

Tour excludes:

- International airfare to Tehran and back
- Iran visa (Cost is currently \$148.00, subject to change)
Passport should not include any Israeli stamps.
- Items of a personal nature (camera fees at sites, laundry, phone calls, emails, excess luggage, etc.)
- Travel protection insurance.
- Transfers if not arriving/departing on scheduled flights/tour dates.
- Dayroom or overnights necessitated by changes in airline schedules.

Trip Grade: Moderately-Rigorous Touring

We will be covering great distances by road during this journey. The roads are very good and the air-conditioned bus very comfortable. You will often be served cold water, tea and fruits along the way. We will make several rest stops (some will not be five star bathrooms and others will be in the beautiful wilderness). It is important to recognize the exhausting nature of some of the long driving days as well as some of the site visits where you might have to climb on uneven terrain and do some long walks. Also, it is our responsibility to inform you that despite the immense progress in standard of accommodations over the last years, you might still encounter minor annoyances, such as leaky plumbing fixtures, or hot water interruptions in hotels. This will necessitate a flexible, tolerant attitude and a sense of humor. Women will be required to wear loose, ankle-length dresses with long sleeves or pants and tunic and have their hair covered with a scarf or shawl at all times when outside their hotel rooms.

Trip Grade: II Active - Some hikes, slightly more demanding walks at or to sites, few elevations, comfortable but busy schedule and some long bus rides.

Lodging Level: ★★★★★ Luxury - Mostly large hotels, typical western standard with ample venues & full amenities. (4- 5 stars)

Spiekermann Travel Service

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