



adventure
associates

Middle East – Persia to Iran

A BOUTIQUE JOURNEY FROM ANCIENT PERSIA TO MODERN IRAN

EXPEDITION MANUAL



Welcome to Iran

Home to the world's greatest concentration of World Heritage-listed sites, Iran is historically and culturally one of the most fascinating countries of the Middle East.

Iran's many historic sites date back to the Persian Empire and beyond; there is much to see and do – wander the ancient ruins of **Persepolis**, marvel at the blue tiled **domes of Yazd**, and the unique **architecture of Masuleh**. Explore **Esfahan**, home to the most majestic collection of buildings in the Islamic world, and **Shiraz**, considered the heartland of Persian culture. Get lost in the rabbit warrens of the UNESCO-listed **bazaar of Tabriz**, or visit the **Alborz mountain range** and the **Caspian Sea**.

Whilst Iran is so well known for its ancient history and civilisations, modern Iran is vibrant and moving forward. However, it is perhaps the most misunderstood country in the world, and arguably one of the modern world's most controversial nations. The focus of our journey is to visit and learn about the ancient treasures of Persia, but also to understand the Iran of today. To find out what it really is like living in modern Iran we will walk with the people, visit their homes, and hear from the people in the bazaars. With this as our aim we hope to offer a unique and authentic experience for our valued travellers.

We are excited to present you with a comprehensive fifteen-day journey that encompasses all of the highlights listed here and more. Our small groups travel by private vehicle accompanied by an English speaking local expert guide who is passionate about their country and keen to share it with you. We stay in 4 and 5 star accommodation, handpicked for its local, and historical character and charm, as well as convenient location. We believe that your accommodation during your stay should reflect the flavour of the destination. It is a large part of the enjoyment of your tour experience – more than just a place to rest your head.

Iranian hospitality is legendary and this is what makes discovering the real Iran such a wonderful surprise. A nation made up of numerous ethnic groups, and influenced over thousands of years by Arab, Turkic, Greek and Mongol occupiers, Iranians are extremely welcoming and genuinely interested to meet foreigners. Indeed, it is often the people of a nation that leave the most lasting impressions, and Iran is no exception. Everywhere you go you will find the local people genuinely interested in where you are from, and what your impressions are of Iran.

We hope you will join us on this very special journey from Ancient Persia to Modern Iran.



PROPOSED ITINERARY

Our in-depth exploration of ancient Persia sees us begin our journey in Shiraz, the heartland of Persian culture and one of the most important cities in the medieval Islamic world. From here we visit the UNESCO World Heritage-listed site of Persepolis, where we wander the ruins of a once great empire until it's fall in 330BC at the hands of Alexander the Great. In Yazd we visit one of the most stunning Mosques in Iran, the Masjed-e Jameh and explore the enchanting maze of historic streets and lanes that make up the old city. In the desert we spend time in the 1500-year-old mud brick village of Garmeh and experience real Iranian hospitality in an overnight homestay. A few days are set aside to experience the stunning city of Esfahan, visually one of the most impressive cities in Iran with it's tree lined boulevards, Persian gardens, and many important Islamic buildings including the Jameh Mosque. From Esfahan we travel to the lovely oasis town of Kashan, known for its textiles, pottery and tiles, its lively

bazaar, and notable 19th-century buildings. From Kashan we travel to the capital Tehran, a modern city with nightlife, restaurants and cafés, a stark contrast to fascinating ancient sites such as the Golestan Palace. From Tehran we continue north to the Alborz Mountains and the picturesque village of Masuleh. As our journey in Iran nears it's conclusion we still have time set aside to travel to Kandovan via the Caspian Sea, an ancient Troglodyte settlement carved from rock and reminiscent of Cappadocia in Turkey. Our final destination before returning to Tehran is Tabriz and it's extraordinary UNESCO-listed Bazar-e Tabriz, a magnificent labyrinth of 24 separate caravanserais covering seven square kilometres.

We conclude our stunning journey with a visit to the glorious Blue Mosque before taking a flight back to Tehran, where we enjoy a final group dinner before our departure the following morning.

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Expert local English speaking guide throughout
- Flight from Tabriz to Tehran
- Group transfers on arrival & departure
- 14 breakfasts, 14 lunches, 14 dinners
- Twin share accommodation in charming 4 & 5 star hotels
- Desert homestay
- Private transportation throughout
- Sightseeing & entrance fees
- Foreign affairs ministry invitation reference

WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED

- International airfares and taxes, visa costs
- Fees for excess baggage, travel insurance, vaccinations
- Other meals or sightseeing not specified in the itinerary
- Drinks, laundry, communication, tips/gratuities



PROPOSED ITINERARY – PERSIA TO IRAN

B= BREAKFAST, L = LUNCH, D = DINNER

Day 1

On arrival in Shiraz you will be met by your guide and transferred to the group hotel.

Shiraz is the heartland of Persian culture and one of the most important cities in medieval Islam. It is synonymous with poetry and wine, education and nightingales. This beautiful city, set in a fertile valley once famed for its vineyards, is home to exquisite mosques and splendidly manicured gardens.

We begin with a visit to the Masjed-e Nasir-al-Molk, one of the most elegant mosques in southern Iran. Built at the end of the 19th century, it has exquisite blue tiling, intricately carved pillars and beautiful stained glass.

Today we also visit the Narenjestan Garden, wander through the bazaar to Vakil Bath, which is now an anthropology museum, and the Masjed-e Vakil. The Vakil Mosque has an impressive tiled portal, a recessed entrance decorated with tiles and muqarnas, and an inner courtyard surrounded by beautifully tiled alcoves

The Shah-e-Cheragh shrine and mausoleum (Mirror mosque), Shiraz.

and porches.

Dominating the city centre is the fortress Arg-e Karim Khan. Built in the early Zand period, the walls feature ornamental brickwork. Inside the fortress is an open courtyard with citrus trees. Opposite the Arg-e Karim Khan is the Madi Faludeh, which is one of the most famous faludeh shops in Shiraz, and also sells delicious Persian ice cream.

In the evening we visit the tomb of the famous poet Khajeh Shams-ed-Din Mohammed or Hafez. A household name in Iran, a copy of his collected works, known as the Divan-e Hafez, can be found in almost every household, and his tomb is somewhat of a pilgrimage for all Iranians.

L,D

Day 2

After breakfast we set out for Yazd (450km/6hrs). Our first stop en-route is the Unesco World Heritage Site of Persepolis. An ancient Achaemenid empire, the ruins we see today hint at the grand scale of this



Nasir Al-Mulk Mosque, Shiraz.



Nasir Al-Mulk Mosque, Shiraz.



The tomb of poet Hafez near his grave at Golgast-e Mosalla.



once great empire, which was built over a period of 150 years from 520BC. After it's fall at the hands of Alexander the Great in around 330BC, the ancient city was lost for centuries, covered by dust and sand, and it was not until the 1930's that extensive excavations revealed what remains of this once powerful empire. During our time at Persepolis we also visit the Naqsh-e Rostam. These four tombs are believed to be those of Darius II, Artaxerxes I, Darius I and Xerxes I. Another 50kms north we visit the ruins of the city of Pasargadae, established by Cyrus the Great in around 546BC. Standing proudly nearby is the Tomb of Cyrus, consisting of stone tiers with a rectangular burial chamber above. The architecture here shows various elements of the major civilisations conquered by Cyrus.

After lunch we continue on our way to Yazd, en-route we stop by the town of Abarkuh to view a beautiful 4000 year old Cypress tree which is believed to be the oldest living thing in Asia. Abarkuh is also known for it's conical shaped icehouses, where the local villagers would store ice wrapped in straw throughout the summer.

Persepolis, Shiraz.

We arrive early evening into Yazd. **B,L,D**

Day 3

Yazd is an enchanting place to wander in the maze of historic streets and lanes.

The city has some of the finest examples of architecture and Persian mosaics in Iran. Many of the old buildings have magnificent windcatchers (badgirs) with large underground areas.

Today we explore the Masjed-e Jameh, one of the most stunning mosques in Iran, the Ateshkadeh (Zoroastrian Fire Temple) and the Towers of Silence. In the Zoroastrian tradition, once a body ceases to live, it can immediately be contaminated and made impure. In order to prevent this and in accordance with Zoroastrian tradition the bodies were placed in the desert atop flat topped towers called Dakhmas. Needless to say, this is no longer practiced today, however a visit to the Towers provides an interesting insight into this old tradition.

Following lunch we hope to visit the water museum where we learn the importance of the Qanats (underground water channels). Given its location



Ali-ebne Hamze Shrine, Shiraz.



Bas relief carving, Persepolis.



Deserted mud-brick village, Kharanaq, Yazd province.



sandwiched between two deserts, water and its management has been crucial to the survival of the city throughout millennia. The museum examines the role water has played and provides insight into the lives of the men who at great risk maintained the tunnels.

Later in the afternoon we wander the old city and bazaar. **B,L,D**

Days 4-5

After breakfast we head to the desert town of Garmeh (360km/5hrs). Enroute we take time to visit Meybod, a sprawling mud brick town approximately 50km north of Yazd. Here we find the crumbling Narin Castle, which dates back to Sassanian times. From the top we are treated to fantastic photo opportunities with views across Meybod and into the desert. We will also stop by the caravanserai where a few handicraft shops can be found. Continuing further into the desert we visit Chak Chak, Iran's most important Zoroastrian pilgrimage site, which attracts thousands of pilgrims during festival time in June.

We reach Garmeh in the late afternoon and with enough time to wander the village at leisure.

A true desert oasis, Garmeh is a picturesque 1500 year old mud brick village surrounded by date palms. It is a wonderful place to experience true Iranian hospitality and home cooking, and showcases another unique and ancient side of Iran.

We spend two nights in Garmeh where we have the option of venturing deep inside the desert to Mesr, for a camel trek, or you may elect just to sit back and enjoy the desert ambience. **B,L,D**

Day 6

After breakfast we embark upon our road journey to Esfahan (430km/6hrs). Enroute we stop at the Jame Mosque in Na'in. This mosque was built in the 10th and 11th Century, it was one of the first mosques constructed in Iran, and it remains one of its most outstanding monuments. Of particular interest is that it was not built in the four-iwan style as other mosques were at the time. It's façade and minaret are strikingly beautiful. Na'in is also famous for its wool textiles and high quality carpets, although Esfahan is the best place to see carpets from all over Iran.

On arrival in Esfahan we check in to our accommodation. The evening is a lovely



Garmeh, oasis village.



Ruins around the Oasis of Garmeh, Dasht-e Kavir.



Shah Mosque, Esfahan.

Mountain village of Abyaneh in central Iran.



time to walk by the river and cross the historical bridge. **B,L,D**

Days 7-8

Visually Esfahan is a most stunning city with its tree-lined boulevards, Persian gardens and many important Islamic buildings such as the Masjed-e Jameh, Masjed-e Shah, Imam Mosque and square and Chehel Sotun Palace.

Not a lot is known of Esfahan's ancient history, however some of the architecture dates back to the Sassanid period of 200 – 600BC, by the 10th century Esfahan was already a sprawling city with impressive mosques and wealthy homes set within its walls.

On our first day in this fascinating city we visit the Imam Square and mosque, Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque, Ali Qapu Palace, and of course a carpet workshop. In the evening we visit the Chehel Sotun Palace and afterwards wander the Old Square.

One of the highlights of our entire journey in Iran is the Jameh Mosque at more than 20,000m² it is the biggest mosque in Iran and still functions as a place of worship. The mosque showcases 800 years of Islamic design and we take a few hours here to gain

some appreciation of this stunning complex.

In the afternoon we visit the Kelisa-ye Vank, a cathedral built between 1648 and 1655. Although unremarkable from the outside, the interior is richly decorated and is an unusual mixture of styles with Christian imagery alongside traditional Islamic design; interestingly it is an historic example of the Armenian Church in Iran.

Time permitting we will re-visit the Khaju Bridge, one of the finest examples of Persian architecture at the height of Safavid cultural influence in Iran. It links the Khaju quarter on the north bank with the Zoroastrian quarter across the Zayandeh River. Although functioning as a bridge and weir, it also served as a building and public meeting place.

This evening, our final in Esfahan, we attend a handicrafts workshop before venturing out for dinner. **B,L,D**

Day 9

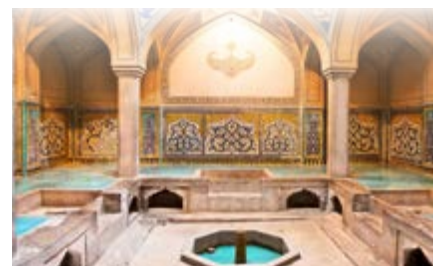
A lovely oasis town on the edge of the Dasht-e Kavir, Kashan is known for its textiles, pottery and tiles. It also has a number of notable 19th century buildings and a lively bazaar. We take time to visit the Fin Garden, and traditional houses of



Siosepol, or Bridge of 33 Arches, constructed in 1602.



Tea House in a Bazaar, Kashan.



Hammam-e Ali Gholi Agha historic bath, Esfahan.

Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque, Naqsh-e Jahan Square, Esfahan.



Khan-e Tabatabaei and Khan-e Boroujerdi, these are grand houses of their era, featuring beautifully intricate stone reliefs, fine stucco and wonderful mirror and stained glass work. In the bazaar, time permitting we pay a visit to the Masjed-e Soltani and the 800 year old Mir Ahmed Mosque.

After lunch we continue on our way to Tehran, arriving in the late afternoon we check in to our hotel. **B,L,D**

Day 10

Tehran is the capital of Iran and has a population of 14 million. The city has many historic mosques, churches, synagogues and Zoroastrian fire temples, however modern structures such as the Azadi Tower and Milad Tower have come to symbolise contemporary Iran. The vast majority of the population understands and speaks Persian, and also identify themselves as Persians. Tehran is a large, interesting and modern city, with nightlife, restaurants and cafés, shopping and business centres, which are a stark contrast to the fascinating ancient sites such as the Golestan Palace situated between the Imam Khomeini

Damavand Mountain, the highest peak in Iran.

Square and the bazaar.

The complex consists of seventeen opulent structures including palaces, museums and halls.

Built around a garden featuring pools as well as planted areas, the Palace's most characteristic features and rich ornaments date back to the 19th century. This really is one of the greatest sites in Iran, and we take our time wandering through the complex with our knowledgeable guide.

In the afternoon we visit the Jewellery museum, which is so valuable it is now housed in the Central Bank of Iran. We will also visit the Archaeological Museum, and Milad Tower, which is the 6th highest tower in the world. **B,L,D**

Days 11-12

Leaving Tehran behind we drive north towards the Alborz mountain chain. En-route we take time to explore the Ghale RudKhan. Located approx. 25 kilometres from Foman, we take a very worthwhile, one-hour hike uphill to access the castle believed to be built during the Seljuk dynasty. The most stunning aspect of the castle is its entrance gate.



Traditional family in the village of Abyaneh, near Kashan.



Mosque near the volcano Damavand.



Village, Kandovan.



Continuing on we eventually reach the historical village of Masuleh, one of Iran's most unusual villages. Built on a steep mountain side and draped in mist-shrouded forest, sit Masuleh's earth-coloured houses. The architecture is unique in that the buildings have been built into the mountains side and are interconnected. Courtyards and roofs serve as pedestrian ways, as well as the roof of the house below it. Due to the unique layout, motor vehicles are not permitted to enter Masuleh.

In the late afternoon we have time to wander the small alleys, visit the charming tea terraces, and of course meet the local people.

Continue on to Ardabil today via the Caspian Sea. **B,L,D**

Day 13

Reminiscent of Cappadocia in Turkey, is a settlement of troglodyte homes carved out of rock. Set beyond the ancient village of Kandovan are the foothills leading to Mt Sahand, a volcano that stands at 3707metres. It is a very picturesque landscape and so make sure to have your camera at the ready. **B,L,D**

Day 14

Today we visit the UNESCO listed Tabriz Bazaar. This is a magnificent labyrinth, which covers 7 km² with 24 separate caravanserais and 22 impressive domed halls. Construction began a millennium ago and it is an extraordinary experience to wander through the colourful maze and take in the sights and sounds. Another famous site is the Blue Mosque, one of the most glorious buildings of its era.

In the afternoon we take our flight back to Tehran. The rest of the day is at leisure before venturing out for our final dinner.

B,L,D

Day 15

Today is the final day of our stunning journey through Iran. Following breakfast we transfer to the airport for onward arrangements. **B**



Mountain village of Masuleh.



Colourful mountains near Tabriz.

Tohid Tunnel, Tehran. The Milad Tower and Alborz mountains can be seen in background.



PERSIA TO IRAN – HOTELS WE USE

We have researched and selected only the best top end hotels in each region we visit. We make sure you're always looked after by friendly staff, that you enjoy

good food and that you have clean and comfortable rooms with en-suites. Here are some examples of the wonderful Iranian accommodation you will experience.



Day 1 Shiraz Homa Hotel *5 star



Day 2,3 Yazd Safayieh Hotel *4 star



Day 4,5 Garmeh Atashooni Local House



Day 6,7,8 Esfahan Abassi Hotel *5 star



Day 13 Tabriz Pars Hotel *5 star



Day 9, 10,14 Tehran Espinas Hotel

IRAN AT A GLANCE

GEOGRAPHY

Full name: Islamic Republic of Iran

National Anthems: 'Sourud-e Jomhuri Islami Iran' (Song of the Islamic Republic of Iran); 'Sourud-e Iran' (Song of Iran)

Area: 1,650,000km²

Capital city: Tehran

Main International Airport: Imam Khomeini International Airport, Tehran

PRACTICALITIES

Time zone: 3 ½ hours ahead of GMT

Electricity: The voltage in hotels and everywhere in Iran is 220V, but it is best to have a universal adapter. European-style sockets and plugs with two round pins are used in Iran.

Currency: Rial IRR (10 Rials = 1 Tuman)

Weights and measure: Metric

International dialing code: +98

Driving side: Right

Visa: Required by all tourists

HUMAN STATISTICS

Population: Over 79million (2013), growing at approx. 1.25% per year

Age structure: 0-14yrs 24.1% of population, 15-64yrs 70.9%, 65yrs and over 5%

Life expectancy: Male 68.6yrs, female 71.6 yrs

Poverty: 18.7% live on less than US\$1.25/day

Literacy: 84% of over 15 years of age can read and write

Official language: Farsi, alongside dialects of Turkish, Arabic and Kurdish

Religion: Predominantly Shi'a Muslims, with some Sunnis, as well as Zoroastrians, Christians and Jews

POLITICS & ECONOMY

Government: A theocracy with a Supreme Leader, an assembly of (Theological) Experts, a Council of Guardians and elected Parliament and President. The President is responsible for the implementation of the Constitution and for the exercise of executive powers, except for matters directly related to the Supreme Leader, who has the final say in all matters. The Supreme Leader is Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces, controls the military intelligence and security operations, and has sole power to declare war or peace. The present Supreme Leader of Iran is Ali Khamenei.

Main Agriculture: Wheat, rice and barley are the major crops

Main exports: Oil and natural gas are Iran's most important exports, accounting for 82 percent of the countries export revenues. Other exports include chemicals, plastics, fruits, ceramic products and metals. Iran's main export partners are: China 21 %, Japan 9.2 % and Turkey 9 %.

Flag: Three horizontal stripes of green, white and red with repeated legend of 'Allah Akbar' ('God is great') around the edge and the red emblem of Iran on the white stripe.

Traditional celebrations during Eid al-Adha, in the mountain village of Masuleh, northern Iran.



THE COUNTRY

GEOGRAPHY

The landscape of Iran varies greatly, most people think of Iran as predominantly desert however Iran is in fact one of the world's most mountainous countries, and despite the long hot summers, approximately two thirds of the country may endure heavy snowfalls during the short sharp winters. It is also a land of great contrasts, both physically and climatically. The topography of Iran consists of rugged, mountainous rims surrounding high interior basins, where the major agricultural and urban settlements are located. In the west of the country are the Zagros Mountains, which form a natural barrier with Iraq, to the north lies the Alborz Mountain Range, and in the south are the Makran Mountains. The Persian Gulf and Gulf of Oman form the 17,770 kilometre southern border, to the east lies Turkmenistan, and Afghanistan, and to the north-west is Azerbaijan. Across the Gulf lies Saudi Arabia and at the southern end of the country Oman lies just across the Sea of Oman.

CLIMATE

There are three to four distinct climates in Iran influenced by Iran's location between the subtropical aridity of the Arabian Desert areas and the subtropical humidity of the eastern Mediterranean area. Most regions experience long, hot summers, and short sharp winters. In the northwest the climate may be likened to that of Switzerland, further east along the south shore of the Caspian Sea, it is quite humid however does not experience

the very high temperatures found further south. In the desert regions it is extremely hot and dry, regular temperatures surge as high as 40 degrees Celsius and more, with an average of 31 degrees Celsius. November to March sees about 70 percent of the average rainfall, and June to August are the dry months where there is usually no rainfall. About two-thirds of Iran's land mass will endure heavy winter snowfalls due to the average altitudes. Very high altitude areas such as the areas around Iran's highest mountain, Mount Demavand (5610m) have perennial snow as well as glaciers.

WATER

The supply of water has always been a cause for concern in Iran. During the 13th century the Mongol invasions were responsible for destroying much of the irrigation channels and dams, so much so that some populations in parts of the Khorasan and Sistan provinces never recovered. In many parts of the country are old underground water channels called qanat, an engineering system where water was tapped from the aquifer level on the mountainsides and guided to the towns and fields. A feature of many towns is the roadside water channels that are often flooded with water and keep the temperatures down. These days the old irrigation systems are being replaced by new ones, however one can still see the old qanat inspection holes, which appear like termite mounds dotted along the landscape.

Red poppies dot the green meadows surrounding the volcano Damavand – in the background – the highest peak in Iran.



A BRIEF HISTORY

Iran is known to be one of the World's oldest civilisations and has been the centre of many empires and conquests. According to archaeological studies, the earliest accounts of humans inhabiting this region date back to the Stone Age.

The Achaemenids (550-330BCE)

The Achaemenid Empire began in the high mountain valleys of southwestern Iran and stretched west into the Balkans and east to the Tian Shan. During this era the ancient city of Persepolis eventually became the ceremonial capital.

The Empire was founded by Cyrus the Great, and was one of the largest in history until the invasion and eventual fall of the empire at the hands of Alexander the Great in 330BC. Upon the death of Alexander the Empire's former territory came under the rule of the Ptolemaic Kingdom and Seleucid Empire, in addition to other minor territories, which gained independence at that time. The Persian population of the central plateau would eventually reclaim power by the second century BC under the Parthian Empire.

The Parthians (c238BCE-224CE)

The Parthian Empire was a major political and cultural power, and largely adopted the art, architecture, religious beliefs, and royal insignia of their culturally heterogeneous empire, which encompassed Persian, Hellenistic and regional cultures. This dynasty lasted 474 years, however little vestiges of its civilization and culture is notably visible today.

The Sasanids (224-658CE)

The Sasanian Empire was the last imperial dynasty in Persia before the rise of Islam. It was founded by Ardashir I, following the fall of the Parthian Empire. It is considered to have been one of Persia's most important historical periods. It could be said that the Sasanian period was the peak of Iranian civilization before Muslim conquest. The Sasanian's cultural influence extended as far as Africa, China, India and Western Europe.

Muslim Conquest

The Sasanid army was defeated in 637 in what is now known today as Iraq, and the last Sasanid Shah was killed in 651. The rise of the Arab Empire was rapid; the province of Syria was the first to fall, with a campaign that lasted from 634 to 641. Egypt was to follow, and was under Arab rule by 642. The Arab conquest of Mesopotamia and Persia began in 633, and was brought under control by 651. In its heyday the

Islamic Empire stretched from Spain and North Africa in the west to the Great Wall of China in the east. During this time trade and commerce flourished, and great technological and scientific advances were made.

The Seljuks (1038-c1220)

The Seljuk Empire was founded by Tughril Beg in 1037, and was a medieval Turko-Persian Sunni Muslim empire. The Seljuk Turks are regarded as the ancestors of the Western Turks, the present-day inhabitants of Turkey, Azerbaijan, and Turkmenistan. The Seljuk played a major role by creating a barrier to Europe against the Mongol invaders from the East, defending the Islamic world against Crusaders from the West, and conquering large parts of the Byzantine Empire.

The Mongols (c1220-c1340)

The Mongol Empire originated in the steppes of Central Asia, and grew rapidly under the rule of Genghis Khan. Persian and Arabic chroniclers portrayed his forces as utterly destructive, and during his conquests many historic cities were razed to the ground and the country's irrigation systems destroyed. The first of a wave of Mongol invasions in 1218 all but destroyed Seljuk authority. The Mongols and descendants of Genghis Khan continued their rule until around 1375 when the controlling Mongol tribe, the Jalayrids yielded authority to the house of Timur Leng towards the end of the 14th century.

The Timurids (c1375 – c1500)

Timur Leng claimed direct descent from Genghis Khan, and dreamed of re-building the Mongol Empire to its heyday under Genghis Khan. From his rule in Samarkand he led many campaigns into Syria, Anatolia, Russia, India, and China. The ruling Timurid dynasty lost most of Persia to the Ag Qoyunlu confederation in 1467, however members of the



Ruins of old houses in the village of Kharanaq in central Iran.

dynasty continued to rule smaller states, otherwise known as Timurid emirates, throughout Central Asia and parts of India. During the 16th century, the Timurid prince Babur invaded Kabulistan, and established a small kingdom, 20 years later he invaded India to establish the Mughal Empire.

The Safavids (1501-1736)

The Safavid Dynasty became one of the most significant ruling dynasty's of Iran, and this era in time is considered the beginning of modern Iranian history. The Safavids ruled from 1501 to 1736, and at the height of their rule controlled modern Iran, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Bahrain, Iraq, Kuwait and Afghanistan, and some parts of Turkey, Syria, Pakistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

The Afsharids (1736-c1750) and the Zand Family (1750-94)

The brilliant military commander Nader Shah founded the Afsharid dynasty in 1736. After his death by assassination, the empire was divided between the Zands, Durranis, Georgians and Caucasian khanates. The Zand ruler Karim Khan Zand controlled most or southern Iran, however the years following the assassination of Nader Shah were chaotic, and the powerful Qajar family took hold of northern Iran and made their way south, ending the Zand rule in 1794.

The Qajar Dynasty (c1757-1924)

Mohammed Khan Qajar, the leader of the Qajars, was known as one of the cruellest kings. During his quest to re-unify Iran he was a ruthless leader. It is said that he blinded 20,000 men in the city of Kerman because they had sought to defend the city against his forces. He also massacred entire populations and razed entire cities. He was eventually assassinated by his own courtiers in Shusha in 1797, and succeeded by his nephew Fath-Ali Shah Qajar. The new Shah established Tehran as the capital, and reigned until his death in 1834.

To follow were turbulent times; the 1901 constitutional revolution, and Nationalist Forces seized Esfahan and Tehran. World War I and the Bolshevik Revolution meant that the World's superpowers were paying no real attention to the political turmoil in Iran. A brigade commander who rose through the ranks of the Iranian army, Reza Khan took over the country and became prime minister in 1923, and two years later the National Assembly called an end to Qajar rule.

The Pahlavi Dynasty (1926-79)

Reza Khan began the regeneration of Iran, and in 1935, requested foreign delegates to use the term Iran, the historical name of the country used by its native people, and the official name Imperial State of Iran was adopted. By 1978 public discontent forced Reza Shah into exile, which sparked a series of events ending in the dissolution of the state on 11 February 1979. This marked the official end of a 2,500-year tradition of Monarchy in Iran.

The Islamic Republic of Iran

Ayatollah Khomeini was a banned theologian in exile in France. At the end of the reign of the Shah he returned to Iran and was welcomed by the general population. He undermined any thought of a democratic government and a referendum was held in 1979. 98% of the population voted for the new Islamic Republic. In May 1980 Saddam Hussein of Iraq invaded Iran, taking hold of Southwest Iran with its rich oil resources. The Iranian forces quickly regained their lost territory, however suffered great losses. Ayatollah Khomeini used this chaotic time to ensure any potential political opponents were taken under control. 30,000 communists, Iranian leftists, trade unionists, university students and intellectuals who did not share his vision were imprisoned, tortured or shot. In 1988 a ceasefire between Iraq and Iran was agreed upon, however it was not until the invasion of

Iraq by the United States, and removal of Saddam Hussein from power that an official peace agreement was reached. During this time major changes were made to administration and the legal system in Iran, Iran is now a theocracy, and under the current constitution is governed by a Supreme Leader, an assembly of (Theological) Experts, a Council of Guardians and elected Parliament and President.



Ruins of a historical wall around the 14th century mausoleum, the Dome of Soltaniyeh, near Zanjan city.

IRANIAN CUSTOM

There are many beautiful traditions and customs observed by Iranians. They are a generous and hospitable people when it comes to foreigners. They have a deep respect for the elderly community and family members, family matters are very important, and loyalty to the family comes before anything. Extended family is also very close. These are things you will notice when you travel in Iran. Iranians consider the three most important things as being - loving God, loving Iran and loving family.

The core concept in Persian culture is called Tarof (or taarof). It is based upon acknowledgement of other people. It shows humbleness and respectfulness.

RELIGION

The state religion of Iran is the Shi'a Ithna 'Ashari branch of Islam, which makes up 90% of the more than 98% of Muslims in the country. The remaining 2% of the population consist of non-Muslims. There are only three small minority religious groups protected and accorded seats in Parliament, Zoroastrians, Christians and Jews.

CULTURE & ARTS

Deep rooted in Iranian culture is a love of poetry, it is said that every household in Iran will have a Quran and the poetry of Hafez, a celebrated Iranian poet, on the bookshelf. Shiraz, known as the heartland of Persian culture is synonymous with poetry and wine, education and nightingales, pilgrims from around the country journey to Shiraz to visit the tombs of Hafez and Sa'di, another celebrated poet.

Iran has a great art heritage visible in architecture,

paintings, calligraphy and poetry, which has influenced many cultures over the centuries. It has a long history with wool and fine silk rug weaving, and Persian rugs are recognised internationally as the finest and most beautiful.

CLOTHING & DRESS CODE

The Islamic dress code for women has relaxed somewhat in recent times, however, some customs must still be observed. Women should wear a headscarf (any colour or pattern) and clothes that cover the body at all times outside hotel rooms. You can wear the regular 'Islamic manteau', easily purchased in Iran at a cost of around USD\$20-40, or long sleeved knee-length tunic/dress over long loose pants or skirt.

Please note that women should wear their headscarf as soon as disembarking from the aircraft on arrival.

It is acceptable for men to wear T-shirts/short sleeves, but should refrain from wearing shorts.

CUISINE

Traditional Iranian food is mainly rice (with barberries, saffron, raisin, herbs) with various kinds of sauce (or "khoresht") made with vegetables and greens (like aubergines, carrots, beans, lentils, onions, and tomato), and meat such as lamb, beef, chicken or fish. Most popular are the various kinds of "kebabs" which are more readily available in smaller restaurants on the roads. A modest selection of western dishes is available in hotels and major restaurants.

Food is generally made with fresh ingredients and is healthy. Rice and cooked vegetables can be arranged for vegetarians. Persian cuisine is not hot or spicy.

Women chat outside a mosque in Esfahan.



OUR EXPEDITION LEADER



Arman Gandomkar is a native of Tehran, and holds an associate degree in tourism from the University of Applied Science and Technology in Tehran. He is fluent in English and has also completed courses in advance tour leadership and historical architecture. A lecturer on Iranian handicraft, historical mosques and traditional houses, Arman has also been

published in major newspapers for his articles on cultural heritage.

He is a popular and experienced tour leader with a wealth of knowledge and experience, and a professional and personable manner. We are most fortunate to have Arman as our main guide, and his passion for the destination makes him a favourite with our groups.

GENERAL TRAVEL INFORMATION

MONEY & CURRENCY

The currency in Iran is the Rial, and you can exchange USD\$1.00 at RLS 28,257 & €1.00 at RLS 30,050 at banks. Most prices that you will see in shops and that shopkeepers will discuss with you will be given in Tomans. One Toman equals 10 Rials. Therefore, an item that cost 24,500 Tomans is actually 245,000 Rials, or about 9 Dollars.

There are no ATM's in Iran for foreign currencies, available ATM's are only for local use. You will need to take cash money. Australian Dollars are easily exchanged almost at all cities, however you can travel with AUD, USD, or Euro and there is no restriction on the amount.



On arrival it is best to

change money at the airport bank, or hotel bank, to cover expenses not included in the tour cost and for personal expenses. You can pay Dollars/Euros for any purchases of handicrafts, carpets, etc. and for tipping drivers and guides. There are no preferences between Dollars and Euros, and both are equally accepted.

CREDIT CARDS

Please note that no credit cards are accepted in Iran for any purpose. Some of the more prestigious carpet shops in Esfahan, with overseas accounts, might accept credit cards for substantial purchases, but this should not be relied upon.

VALUABLES

Please try and leave any non-essential valuables at home (jewellery etc). Money belts worn underneath clothing are useful. Don't take all your money with you when out sightseeing. We advise utmost caution at popular tourist



Above: Traditional Iranian carpet shop in Vakil Bazaar, Shiraz.

Below: Grains, spices, fruits, and flowers at an Iranian bazaar.



spots and at airports – don't leave luggage unattended. Adventure Associates is not to be held responsible for the loss or theft of any jewellery, cash, etc. We recommend you bring with you only what you consider necessary.

TIPS/GRATUITIES

In Iran tipping of your guide and driver is customary. As a rough guide you can budget around \$12 per person per day for your guide, and \$8 per person per day for your driver. As a general rule tips are not expected in restaurants, and in some more up market establishments there is a compulsory 15% service charge.

For hotel porters 5,000 rials is sufficient for carrying and assisting you with your luggage, toilet attendants may expect around 1,000 rials.

SHOPPING & SOUVENIRS

Iranians still rely on the bazaars for much of their shopping needs. The cities of Tehran, Esfahan, Shiraz and Kashan all have vibrant and atmospheric bazaars where you can browse through the maze of colourful markets beneath domed ceilings. Considered the greatest bazaar in the world is the heritage listed Bazar-e Tabriz, once one of the most important trading centres of the Silk Road. There are a dizzying amount of arts and crafts in the bazaars, from ceramics and glass work to fine miniatures and marquetry,

and of course the famous Persian carpets and kilims. There are carpet shops everywhere in Iran, however the most memorable place to shop for one is in the bazaars.

ELECTRIC CURRENT

The voltage in hotels and everywhere in Iran is 220V, and it is best to have a universal adapter. European-style sockets and plugs with two round pins are used in Iran.

MEALS

Meals during the tour are included as indicated in the itinerary as B.L.D.

Meal times may vary according to the day's activities.

WATER

Water varies in purity from place to place. It is safer to drink bottled or mineral water. Be wary of ice blocks, peeled fruit and salads unless served in better class hotels and restaurants. Iodine water purification tablets or a Steripen can also help.

ALCOHOL

The import, possession or consumption of alcohol is strictly forbidden in Iran.

TIME CONVERSION

Iran is 3.5 hours ahead of GMT.

TRAVELLER'S TIP

Start your adventure with an open mind and resolve to take any itinerary changes in your stride – relax and enjoy your opportunity to visit this fascinating country and its people. Areas we visit are extremely interesting, however,

some parts remain remote and tourism infrastructure is often largely undeveloped. Please understand that delays and variations to the itinerary, transport, hotels and food standards, may occur.

PACKING HINTS & CLOTHING SUGGESTIONS

The main consideration when travelling in Iran is that you must dress conservatively. Women should wear a headscarf (Hijab) of any colour or pattern and clothes that cover your body at all times outside hotel rooms. It is acceptable for men to wear T-shirts/short sleeves, but not shorts.

We recommend you keep your baggage to a comfortable minimum. Pack simply and lightly. Clothing that you can layer will prepare you for all kinds of weather, some areas that we visit have a higher elevation and temperatures can be cooler. In packing your carry-on bag for the flight, we suggest you pack essential toiletries, medicines, and a change of clothing in the event you reach your destination without some or your checked luggage.

Dress is casual for the entire program; please leave formal evening wear at home!

STEP BY STEP: HOW TO WEAR THE HIJAB:

- Fold the scarf into a triangle.
- Place scarf on your head with one side longer than the other and one under the chin.
- Take longer side and wrap it behind your head and bring it to the other side.
- Put the scarf behind your head and at the shoulder.

There are various ways to wear the Hijab, here is an example.



CHECK LIST

The following clothing list is designed to assist you in preparing for your tour:

- For women, a headscarf is important and must be worn as part of Iranian custom
- 2-3 pairs of long pants/comfortable travel pants, loose & comfortable
- 3 shirts, (long sleeved for women)
- 1 light sweater or light fleece jacket
- 1 good-quality lightweight raincoat or heavy-duty poncho
- Socks, underwear, Pyjamas etc.
- Sunhat with brim or a cap
- Bandannas or handkerchiefs, handy for dusty areas
- Walking shoes, rubber soled
- Rubber sandals
- 1 pair of pants or skirt/dress for slightly more dressy occasions (farewell dinner)

For your safety kit you should pack ample supply of basic health and first aid needs including:

- Any prescription drugs, medication and vitamins that you take on a regular basis. A letter should accompany these from your doctor certifying that such medications are vital to your health. Dosage should be indicated. Pack these essentials in your carry-on luggage.
- Common remedies such as antacids, laxatives, decongestants, indigestion tablets, aspirin, throat lozenges, and other medications that you may use for common ailments
- Tropical antibiotic
- "Wet ones" or similar
- Aspirin or other analgesic
- Band-aids, antiseptic
- Air / motion sickness preventatives if needed
- Sunscreen and sunburn relief products, chap stick and protective lotions for lips and face you would normally use
- Personal toiletries or hygiene products.

Elegant modern Muslim dress style.



The following items may come in handy during your adventure:

- Folding umbrella
- Small flashlight or head torch
- Travel alarm clock
- Travellers clothes line
- Small Backpack suitable for carrying your photographic equipment and safety kit during the day
- Walking poles collapsible
- Spare set of prescription eye glasses or contact lenses for emergencies
- Sunglasses with a strap (and an extra pair in case you lose yours)
- Plastic bags of various sizes, including "zip lock" type for electronic equipment etc.
- Camera, camera bag, video camera
- Plenty of memory cards and batteries to capture the memories of your Iranian adventure!
- Notebook and pencil
- Plastic water bottle
- Reading and writing materials
- Nail clippers, scissors, small sewing kit and safety pins – NB. Please remember that these "sharps" must be packed in your checked luggage on all flights for airport security reasons.
- An electrical adaptor for any appliances you wish to take and a power board can be handy for multiple charging.

IMPORTANT: Keep all travel documents such as passport, airline tickets, and travel vouchers with you all the time.

A woman in traditional dress approaches the Jamkaran mosque.



PHOTOGRAPHIC TIPS AND SUGGESTIONS

We expect that everyone will bring some kind of camera be it a mobile phone or a professional SLR camera with all the bells and whistles. Remember to take extra memory cards and some spare camera batteries with you as it can be expensive or inconvenient to purchase these whilst travelling in Iran.

Be careful with photographs or video recordings. Ask your local guide first if it is appropriate to take photographs or to make video recordings in Iranian communities, Avoid close up shots, and never remunerate people with money for a photograph.

Please refrain from photographing government offices, airports, military depots, police stations and any place that is 'deemed' off limits! Always check with your guide to make sure what is allowed and what is not

When photographing people, especially women, it is customary to first ask for their permission, but most Iranians are happy to have their picture taken.

Following are a few simple tips and suggestions that may help you get sorted before you go. Whatever camera you bring it is possible to get good images.

- Get to know your camera, make sure it is working correctly and that you understand all its main functions.
- Read and bring the instructions manual. Download an electronic version onto your laptop.
- Remember to pack the battery charger.
- Have some way of keeping your camera equipment dry and safe from dust. Lightweight nylon dry bags work well and are available in many sizes.
- Tripod and Monopod. A quality tripod is invaluable for the serious photographer. However they can be big, heavy and cumbersome to carry during our walks. A monopod is lighter and can be used as a walking stick for support.
- If you bring an SLR camera a good zoom could be handy. 200mm – 300mm is a good focal length. (Remember that on an SLR camera with a 1.5 crop-factor sensor a 200mm lens is equivalent to a 300mm lens on full frame sensor).
- We recommend that you carry all photography equipment, cords, chargers and storage devices in your carry-on luggage in case your main luggage is left behind somewhere.

Women enjoy a hookah at a traditional tea house in Kerman.



Ancient Jordan Extension

Many of our travellers like to make the most of their time away, and our 6 day tour of Jordan has become a popular add-on to our Persia to Iran Journey. This extension can be easily added on to your tour in Iran.

PROPOSED ITINERARY – ANCIENT JORDAN

B= BREAKFAST, L = LUNCH, D = DINNER

Day 1

JOIN AMMAN, TRANSFER TO JERASH

If you are arriving on day 1 you will be met by one of our representatives who will assist with arrival and visa formalities. Once completed we drive to the ancient city of Jerash for a tour of one of the most famous and well preserved of all the Greco/Roman cities, the city was one of the ten Roman citadels known as the "Decapolis". Overnight Amman Arena Space Hotel. **B,L**

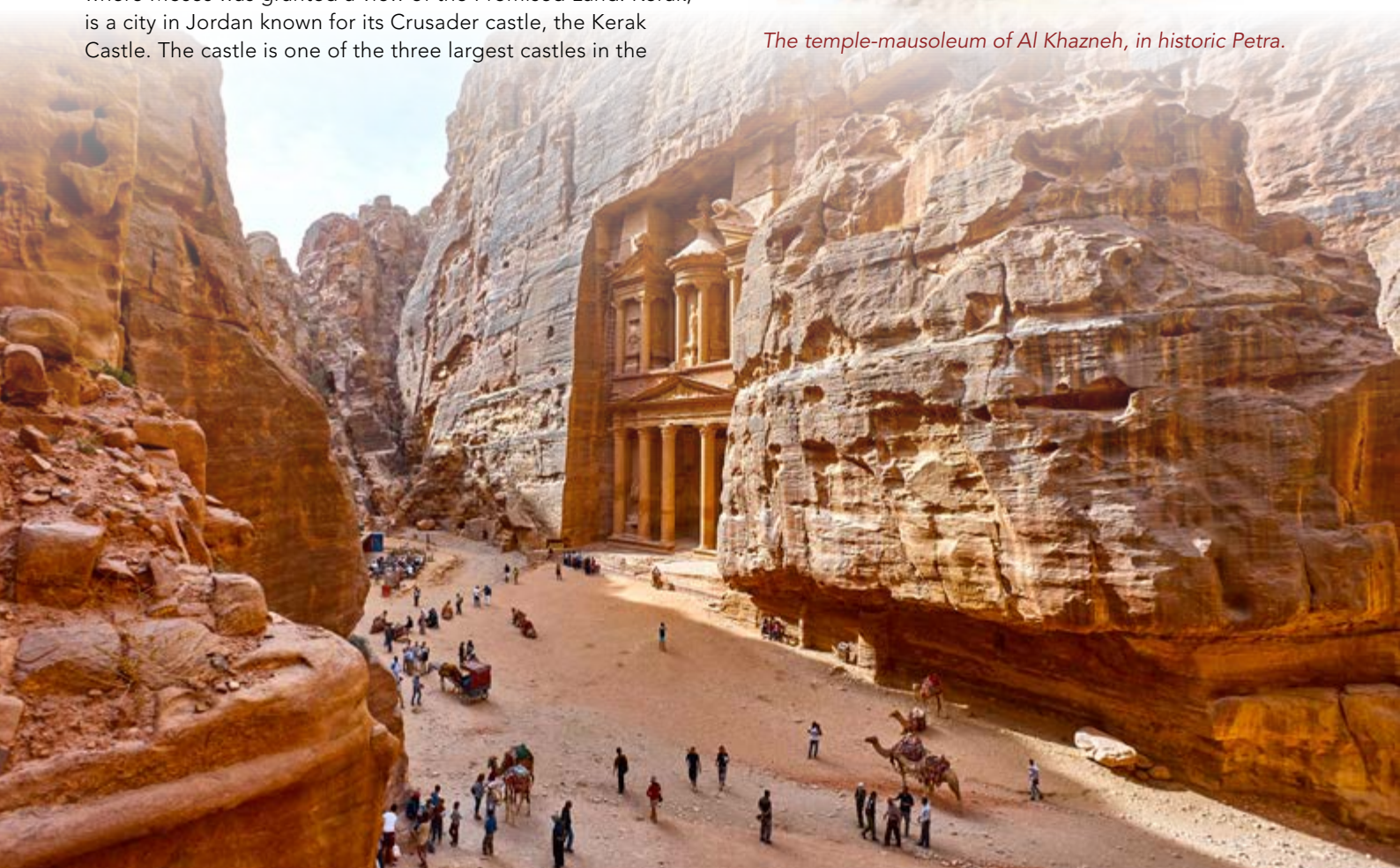
Day 2

AMMAN TO PETRA, VIA MADABA, MT NEBO & KERAK

After breakfast, we travel along the Kings Highway to Madaba, well known for its Byzantine mosaics. The city is the perfect location for exploring the holy sites. Mt. Nebo is an elevated ridge in Jordan, and is mentioned in the Bible as the place where Moses was granted a view of the Promised Land. Kerak, is a city in Jordan known for its Crusader castle, the Kerak Castle. The castle is one of the three largest castles in the



The temple-mausoleum of Al Khazneh, in historic Petra.



region. We continue along the Kings Highway to the ancient city of Petra – a vast and unique city carved into sheer rock faces by the Nabataean Arabs. Petra is also known as the Rose City due to the pink sandstone cliffs out of which it is hewn. Overnight at Petra Panorama Hotel. **B,L**

Days 3 - 4

PETRA

Luckily we have 2 full days to explore the treasures of Petra and immerse ourselves in the history. Nothing can prepare you for the one km magical walk through the narrow chasm of Al Siq, which leads to the impressive façade of Al Khazneh, the Treasury. There is time to absorb the archaeological wonders and the engineering ability of these ancient people. **B,L**



Inside the South Theatre of the Roman ruins of Jerash.

Day 5

PETRA – WADI RUM – DEAD SEA

After breakfast in Petra, we drive to the Wadi Rum, where black and wind-scalped hills stand like foreboding sentinels, often described as the “Valley of the Moon”. We take a 4WD excursion into the desert where the Bedouin have lived since ancient times and on to the Dead Sea. At over 400m below sea level, its shores are Earth’s lowest elevation on land. It is flanked by mountains and the rolling hills of Jerusalem, giving it an almost other-worldly beauty. The area is believed to have been home to five Biblical cities: Sodom, Gomorrah, Adman, Zebouin and Zoar (Bela). We may take a swim in the salty waters or just relax by the seaside. Overnight SPA Hotel. **B,L**



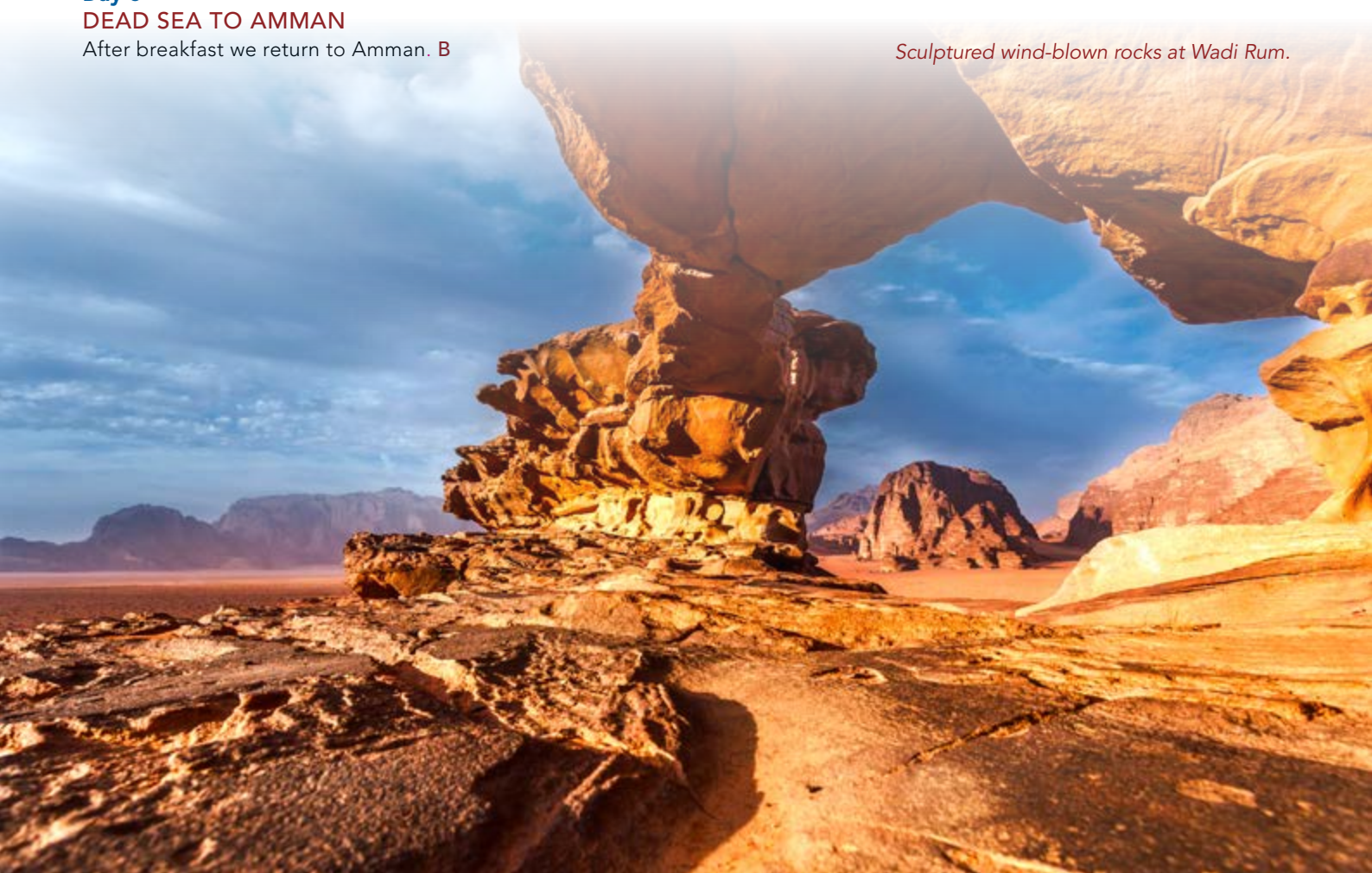
Jordanian Bedouin pours hot tea from a tea jug at Wadi Rum.

Day 6

DEAD SEA TO AMMAN

After breakfast we return to Amman. **B**

Sculptured wind-blown rocks at Wadi Rum.



SUGGESTED READING LIST

HISTORY

Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution, Nikki R Keddie Reviews recent developments in Iran since 2003.

Days of God: The Revolution in Iran and its consequences, James Buchan Buchan is a Persian scholar & a former foreign correspondent: "the best book on Iran I have ever read", *Sunday Times*.

A History of Iran, Empire of the Mind: An excellent history of Iran and the challenges it faces by Michael Axworthy.

Revolutionary Iran: a History of the Islamic Republic, gives a valuable insight into Iran since 1979.

The Iran-Iraq War: A Military and Strategic History by Williamson Murray & Kevin M. Woods

In the Rose Garden of the Martyrs: Christopher de Bellaigue A superb insider's account of Iran and its people.

Shah of Shahs: by Ryszard Kapuscinski Travel writer and war correspondent Kapuscinski describes the final years of the Shah.

The Mantle of the Prophet: Religion and Politics in Iran, Roy Mottahedeh Kamin Mohammadi describes this book as "a must-read for anyone".

The Persians: Ancient, Mediaeval and Modern Iran: A authoritative and comprehensive history of Iran, written by Homa Katouzian

A History of Modern Iran: by Ervand Abrahamian

TRAVEL WRITING/MEMOIRS

Persia through Writers' Eyes:, David Blow. A wonderful travel series, which includes writing by everyone from Herodotus to John Simpson

Iran Awakening: A Memoir of Revolution and Hope, Shirin Ijadi. This book is a "powerful condemnation of the dictatorship of the Ayatollahs, recounting the suffering of those whom Ebadi represented".

The Ayatollah Begs to Differ: the Paradox of Modern Iran, Hooman Majd. An invaluable guide to contemporary Iranian life and culture.

Mirrors of the Unseen: Journeys in Iran, Jason Elliot Following in the footsteps of Robert Byron, Jason Elliot paints a vivid picture of Iran & its people: "A work of profound thought, imagination, passion and ambition", Sara Wheeler, *Guardian*.

The Blindfold Horse: Memories of a Persian Childhood, Shusha Guppy An enchanting account of growing up in Persia before the revolution: "It conveys a sense of the country and its customs, which reveal better than most documents, the nature of the crisis which Iran is still enduring", *William Shawcross, Sunday Times*.

Persian Pictures: From the Mountains to the Sea, Gertrude Bell Explorer Gertrude Bell travelled through Persia in 1892.

Cyprus Tree: Kamin Mohammadi Mohammadi tells the story of modern Iran through the eyes of three generations of Iranian women.

Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood and Persepolis 2, the Story of a Return, Marjan Satrapi Satrapi uses the form of the graphic novel to describe life in Iran pre & post revolution through her child's eyes. Magnificent, moving & highly original.

City of Lies: Ramita Navai. Rich, absorbing, and exotic.

FICTION

My Uncle Napoleon: Iraj Pezeshkzad. A hilarious tale of family life in pre-revolutionary Iran.

The Secret of Laughter: Magical Tales from Classical Persia. Shusha Guppy Guppy's magical retelling of a selection of Persian folk tales: "

GUIDEBOOKS

Iran, Bradt: The best guide to Iran combining practical information and detailed historical and cultural background.

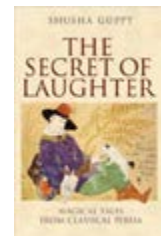
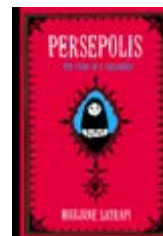
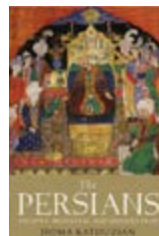
Many of these titles can be bought online from the following online bookstores:

Longitude books:

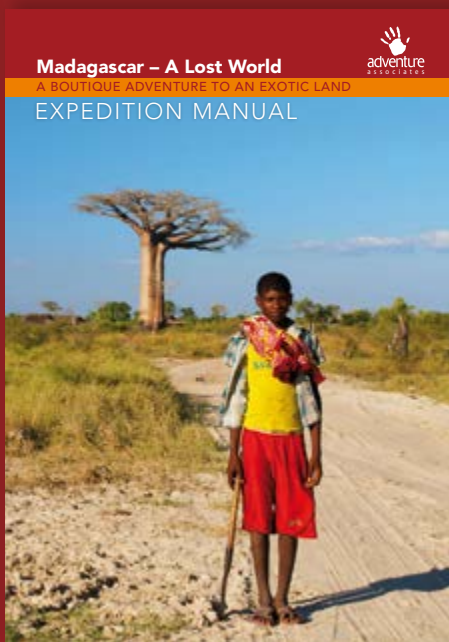
<http://www.longitudebooks.com/search>

Amazon Books:

https://www.amazon.com.au/s/ref=nb_sb_noss/352-9522312-6972851?url=search-alias%3Daps&field-keywords=iran&rh=%3Aaps%2Ck%3Airan



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