

12 Days

Iran

Secrets of Persia

Iran, a country of dramatic contrasts is the latest school trip destination from the STC. Blessed with scenery ranging from snow-clad mountains to vast, inhospitable deserts, this comprehensive tour uncovers the treasures of Persia, providing a fascinating insight for students learning about religion, politics and history. Journey through Islamic centres at Yazd, Shiraz and Isfahan and visit the legendary ruins at Persepolis. Spend time in Iran's atmospheric capital city of Tehran, visit a traditional tea house and stay in a mountain village, the tradition of hospitality never fails to impress in this fascinating, and relatively undiscovered, country.



Recommended tour itinerary

Day
1

Arrive Tehran

Fly UK to Tehran, Iran's vibrant, chaotic yet charming capital. Tehran has only been the capital for 200 years, yet in the last century it has seen its population explode and is now home to more than 15 million inhabitants. It is a fine example of tradition and modernity coexisting side by side.

Day
2

Explore Tehran

We have a full day to explore this great city. Our first stop is the National Museum, also known as the Museum of Ancient Iran, where we learn of Persia's 2,500-year rich history. Next stop is the majestic Golestan Palace, a masterpiece of beauty from the Qajar era, reflecting Persian and Western architecture. After lunch we move on to the Iman Khomeini Mosque. Our final stop is the Carpet Museum, where we have the chance to admire impressive carpets from all over Iran. This evening we try some fine Iranian cuisine, such as Dizi (soup stew mashed into paste), while enjoying traditional music at a local restaurant.

Day
3

Train to Yazd

Today we experience a different side of Iranian life as we journey by train to Yazd, a fantastic way to see the country. In spite of its harsh surroundings, Yazd has long been a prosperous staging post on the caravan route to Central Asia and India during the silk road period. The nearby mountains provide a dramatic backdrop and also supply water by a series of qanats (deep underground channels) to nearby villages.

Known for its intriguing architecture, Yazd has often been described as a living museum and is a town best explored on foot. The clay-brick houses and ancient Islamic buildings, seemingly weave together in narrow alleys making up the old city. It is perfectly adapted to the harsh weather conditions of the surrounding desert and is one of the best preserved mud brick old towns in the East. This morning we visit the impressive Amir Chakhmaq Complex, the Jameh Mosque, the Water Museum and the 'Towers of Silence', a traditional Zoroastrian burial ground where bodies used to be quickly returned to nature by being devoured by vultures. Before the Arab conquest and the arrival of Islam, Zoroastrianism was the state religion and there is still a 12,000 strong community in Yazd today.

Day
4

Shiraz

We continue our journey by road to Shiraz (440km), stopping en route at Abarkuh to see its famous and ancient cypress trees; at over 25m high and 18m wide they are thought to be over four thousand years old. We continue our drive to Shiraz, the city of roses and nightingales whose very name evokes images of ancient Persia: exotic, tranquil gardens, lavish mansions, colourful woollen rugs, not to mention its history in Persian art and poetry.

Our Shiraz walking tour the following morning starts at the Narenjestan gardens, built between 1879 and 1886. The mirrored hall and rooms covered in intricate tiles and stained glass windows make it a sight to be seen. From here we take a short walk to the Nasir al-Mulk mosque. Built in the Qajar era and still in use, it is famed for its intricate glasswork. After lunch there are plenty of sites to discover. We may choose to visit Saadi's Tomb in the north-east of Shiraz, or the Shahcheragh, which, having two sacred Imamzadehs buried there, makes it one of the most sacred shrines for Shiites. We can also incorporate a visit to a traditional teahouse in the wonderful Bazar-e Vakil.





Day
7

Naqsh-e-Rustam & Persepolis

We make an early start, spending the whole day in one of the most important sites of the Ancient World. Founded in 512 BC when the Persian empire stretched from the Indus Valley to the Aegean, Persepolis is the ceremonial capital of the Achaemenid kings. We visit the remains of the imposing palaces of Darius the Great, Xerxes and Artaxerxes. We will also visit Naqsh-e-Rostam to see Ka'be-Zardosht (the fire temple) and royal tombs, plus the seven magnificent Sassanian rock-reliefs (including Shapur the First's famous victory over Roman Emperor Valerian).

Day
8

Persepolis, Pasargadae, drive to Isfahan

We return to Persepolis to visit the Tomb of Hafez, one of Iran's most famous poets. Continuing on to the ruins of Pasargadae, where Cyrus the Great of the Achaemenid Dynasty built his capital we can explore. Although quickly superseded by Persepolis, Pasargadae has enchanted travellers, including Alexander the Great, through the ages. We complete the day with a drive to Isfahan (total 425km).

Day
9

Isfahan

We have a full day in one of Iran's greatest cities, Isfahan. Records suggest that Isfahan was an important trading centre at the beginning of the Islamic period. The town had a turbulent early history but recovered when, in the 16th century, Shah Abbas moved his capital here, endowing the city with lavish monuments. The Shah's grand vision is still visible when exploring the city. We have a full day to explore, starting at its centre, the Maidan-e Imam (Imam Square), one of the finest city squares in the world containing the immense tiled Imam Mosque, Ali Ghapu's Palace and the mosque of Sheikh Lotfollah. We continue to the Chehel Sotun Palace and after lunch head to the Qeisarieh Bazaar with hundreds of shops displaying the arts and handicrafts for which Isfahan is world famous. In the evening, we stroll along the river to the Si-o-se-pol Bridge. Isfahan is a rarity among Iranian cities in that a river passes through it. This contributes to the city's pleasant climate.

Day
10

Mountain village at Abyaneh

We drive to the mountain village of Abyaneh, situated on the slopes of Mount Karas at 2500m. With tightly packed red-coloured houses constructed from mud, brick, clay and wooden lattice windows, the village is seemingly unaffected by the uprisings suffered by other parts of Persia. Abyaneh has remained intact since Safavid times with the inhabitants retaining their ancient customs, many still wearing traditional clothing.

Day
11

Kashan & return to Tehran

We head back to the capital, Tehran, driving through the arid desert. En route we stop at Kashan, an oasis town where carpet, silk and textile weaving are the traditional crafts. It was from Kashan that the Three Wise Men reputedly started their epic journey to Bethlehem. Kashan has some of the finest traditional houses in Iran. We include a visit to the exquisite Fin Garden as well as the House of Boroujerdi, the fine courtyard and intricate workmanship offering an insight into early 19th Century Iran. We continue on from there by bus to Tehran.

Day
12

Tehran relax

We have a full day back in the capital. No activities have been planned for the last day allowing for full flexibility for your school.

Day
13

Depart Tehran & return Flight to UK

This morning we wave goodbye to our lovely Trip Leader as we board the return flight to the UK and rehearse the tales of our adventure for our friends and family at home!

Further information

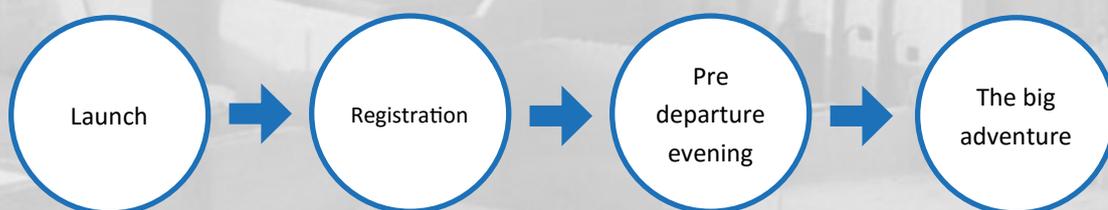
Look what's included!

- International flights
- All accommodation
- All food
- All transportation and activities
- Bi-lingual, first-aid qualified local tour leader
- Parent and student trip launch evening
- Pre-departure preparation evening
- 1-day offsite safety INSET day for staff
- ATOL financial protection
- Medical Emergency / Repatriation Travel Insurance
- Group first aid kit and prescription meds pack
- BS8848 safety management and risk assessments
- Detailed pre-departure information and kit lists
- Comprehensive teacher travel packs
- Permanent operations team in your destination
- 24-hour UK operational support whilst overseas
- Carbon offsetting of all flights
- Free t-shirt for every participant and teacher

What's excluded?

- Transport to airport in UK
- Drinks (advice will be given on purification of water)
- Visas or tourist cards if required
- Any required inoculations
- Personal spending money
- Tips for guides, drivers and porters
- Airport departure taxes paid locally
- Cancellation and personal effects insurance

Your educational journey timeline



Physical journey rating:



Some low level physical activities included in your trip, including walking on uneven terrain, maybe a morning/afternoon trek of two to four hours. That said, no physical preparation is required to make the most of the tour. High humidity and temperatures can occur at certain times of the year.

Culture shock rating:



Students should expect some culture shock. You'll be exposed to signs of poverty. The food will be quite different to home and English, whilst still spoken, will be less prevalent. Respecting the local culture will make it easier to fit in and get the most out of your trip. We're likely to visit remoter locations on this tour where access to western style services may be sporadic. Often on trips of this grading there are parts of the itinerary which are more remote, interspersed with sections which are more 'comfortable'.

A journey of 1,000 miles...

Starts with a single step... Contact us now to start your educational journey.

1 Get your tailor-made proposal and further information

If this itinerary doesn't quite scratch your educational travel itch then let us tailor-make one for you. Our wealth of experience and expert in-country contacts means we can design an itinerary just for you. Contact us for more information and a detailed quote.

2 Ask for risk assessments and marketing materials

We can provide initial risk assessments and destination threat assessments to help you with your expedition approval process. Ask for posters and your pre-booking information pack too.

3 Arrange a trip launch evening at your school

This is a chance for students and parents to hear more about the planned adventure with a comprehensive information evening and an opportunity for questions.



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