

HOLIDAY IN IRAN & AZERBAIJAN

16 Day – 15 Night

Type: Historical / Cultural / Discover

Shiraz 2N/Yazd 2N/Isfahan 3N/Tehran 2N/Baku
3N/Gabala 1N/Shaki 1N/Naftalan 1N



HIGHLIGHTS

- Discover an Iran beyond the media portrayals of a repressive and dour regime – this is a country full of warm, lively and friendly people.
- Explore the rich history told in the ancient ruins that lie across the country. Modern Iran is a great fusion of civilizations – the Archaemedians, Alexander the Great, the Parthians, Sassanians, Arabs, Seljuks, Mongols, and Safavids – who all left their mark in innumerable ways.
- Visit some of UNESCO World Heritage sites in Iran & Azerbaijan
- See ancient underground water channels, called Qanats, in Yazd.
- Discover Isfahan, the old capital and the 'Jewel of Islamic Iran'.
- Visit Kashan, including Fin Garden and the historical houses of Brojerdi's and Tabatabai's.
- Walk in the Iranian indoor markets and drown in colors and smells and beauties.
- Azerbaijan's cosmopolitan capital of Baku is often referred to as the 'new Dubai'. Enjoy a guided walking tour around the city's World Heritage-listed Old Town.
- Mud volcanoes, ancient mosques, lush forests and tall peaks – the Caucasus Mountains will take your breath away
- Visit Gobustan National Reserve and Temple of Zoroastrians Atashgah

Iran is home of one of the oldest civilizations in the world, dating back to the Persian Empire 2,500 years ago. The country lies at the crossroads of three continents: Asia, Africa and Europe, and many ancient civilizations. A significant section of the Silk Road runs across Iran as do other great caravan routes to the south. On this tour, travel through Iran to explore the ancient civilizations, glorious monuments, and architecture, extraordinary UNESCO World Heritage sites, stunning desert landscapes, ethical diversity and exotic Persian cuisines.

After the wars of Iran and Russia According to the Treaty of Turkmenistan in 1828, Azerbaijan, Armenia and Nakhchivan were separated from Iran and transferred to Russia. Neither fully Asian nor European, Azerbaijan is an enigmatic country of medieval architecture, Soviet planning, mud-bubbling volcanoes and “flaming mountains”. This tour takes you from the mishmash capital of Baku, with its ancient and very, very modern buildings, to the nearby Absheron Peninsula, with its Temple of the Fire Worshippers and mud volcanoes. Baku sits on the shores of the Caspian Sea, and there will be time to take a boat ride here – across the largest body of inland water in the world.

Meet with the locals, arguably the friendliest and most hospitable people on earth, always ready to welcome visitors with a smile. Learn more about their cultures and traditions during this 16-day guided trip of Iran and Azerbaijan. To know more about this tour please read the itinerary below.

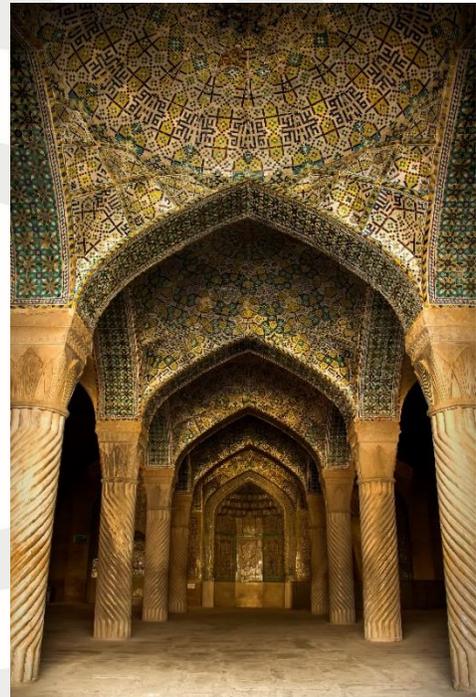
ITINERARY

Day 1: Welcome to Iran-Shiraz

Salam! You will fly to Shiraz with flight TK884 Turkish Airlines via Istanbul. Your flight will land at 02:05 o'clock at Shiraz International Airport. After your welcome, the tour guide will transfer you to the hotel. Since you arrived in Shiraz in the morning, all your check-in have already been done. Have a good rest and collect your energy for the next morning.

Day 2: Explore Shiraz

Visit the Nasir-ol-Molk Mosque (Pink Mosque) after breakfast. This mosque was built as per the order of one of the lords during the reign of the Qajar Dynasty, Mirza Hasan 'Ali Nasir-ol-Molk, and it took 12 years to complete. Its interiors are a magnificent masterpiece of design with stunning colors. This is a space where light and worship intertwine. The mosque comes to life with sunrise and colors dance on its floor throughout the day like whirling dervishes. Also visit the orange-scented Narenjestan Garden, laid out in the 19th century, before heading for the bustling Vakil Bazaar, home to hundreds of stores, beautiful courtyards and even an ancient caravanserai. Your next destination is the Karim Khan Citadel, built during the Zand Dynasty. End your day in Shiraz on a tranquil note in the lovely garden tombs of Sa'adi and Hafez, two of the most outstanding poets of Persia.



Day 3: Shiraz - Yazd

We spend today exploring the heritage of the Achaemenid dynasty in Persepolis and the royal tombs of Naghsh-e-Rostam. Persepolis, the ceremonial capital of the Achaemenid kings with remains of the palaces



of Darius the Great, Xerxes and Artaxerxes, is famous for its bas-reliefs depicting kings, courtiers and gift-bearing representatives of tributary nations of the Persian Empire ranging from India to Ethiopia. We then visit nearby Naghsh-e-Rostam to see Ka'be-Zardosht (a fire temple) and the royal tombs dug into the rock itself. This site also has seven magnificent Sassanian rock-reliefs including Shapur the First's famous victory over Roman Emperor Valerian. We will continue to visit Pasargad, the site of the simple, but impressive tomb and remains of the palaces of Cyrus the Great, the founder of the Persian Empire. After a long day, we arrived in Yazd at night and go to the hotel.

Day 3: Explore Yazd

This ancient desert city was a major stop on the caravan routes to Central Asia and India during the Silk Road period – Marco Polo even visited the city on his way to China – and it still retains a rustic feel today. Yazd is also the heart of the Zoroastrian religion. On arrival, set out on a walking tour visiting the Jameh Mosque, notable for its fine mosaics and beautiful exterior.



From here you are ideally placed to explore the older parts of the city, which are some of the oldest on Earth according to UNESCO. Walk the narrow kuches (lanes), past simple courtyards and the ornate doors of the mud brick buildings. One of the most distinctive features of Yazd are the wind towers ('badgirs') that capture even the softest of breezes and send them to the buildings below in a forerunner of modern air-con. The water museum shows how the quants (underground water channels) brought water to the city from the mountains for thousands of years.



You will also visit the Fire Temple and Towers of Silence, both vestiges of the city's Zoroastrian heritage. In the Zoroastrian religion, fire and water are agents of ritual purity, and the fire in the Atashkadeh Fire Temple is said to have been continuously burning since 470 AD. The places we will see in Yazd include: Amir Chakhmagh Ensemble, Fahadan old neighborhood, Zlyaiyeh School (Aleksandra Prison), Congregational Mosque, old Fire Temple, Water Museum, and Dolat Abad Garden. Return to the hotel and rest.



Day 5: Yazd – Meybod - Na'in - Isfahan

We start overland journey from Yazd to Isfahan. Take a detour to the small town of Meybod. Set along an ancient trade route, Meybod also offers a number of fascinating sites to visit, including its caravansera.

100 rooms – some of which are now used as workshops. Built in a typical Safavid style, this ancient desert inn features verandahs, shaded passageways and nearly

Visit Na'in, an ancient community with origins dating back to the 8th century AD. At the local Ethnographic Museum, set in an erstwhile private residence, you'll get the chance to learn more about the region's history and culture. Before going to Esfahan, we go to the Jame Mosque. At the local icehouse, you'll learn about the thick-clay construction and subterranean chambers that allowed local residents to store ice and food even during the intense desert heat of summer before refrigeration came along.



Reach Isfahan, the 17th-century capital of the Safavid Empire and one of the world's greatest cities – architecturally striking, wealthy beyond imagining, and politically powerful with Europeans, Ottomans, Indians and Chinese coming to its court. It was also 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 was such that it inspired the rhyming proverb, Isfahan nesf- e Jahan (Isfahan is half the world).

Join our expert guide in exploring the city, starting with some of the centuries-old, still-elegant bridges that span the Zayandeh River. The 14th-century Shahrestan Bridge, for example, reminds one of the aqueducts of ancient Rome and is the oldest bridge in Iran.

Other famous bridges on the Zayandeh River are Sio-se-pol and Khajou. There are sluice gates below the bridges to let the water flow down the river in the spring and there are beautiful stony archways above each gate.

Day 6: Explore Isfahan

Start the day by exploring Imam Square, the 17th-century site which is also one of the largest public spaces in the world. Visit the Shah Mosque, revered as a masterpiece of Islamic architecture and easily recognized due to its magnificent tile work and a soaring cupola and minarets. Marvel at the beautiful music rooms and balconies of Ali Qapu Palace and get the



chance to explore the Qeisarieh Bazaar, which surrounds Imam Square. 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. 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. Enter into the building through a portico supported by twenty slender wooden columns and discover soaring halls embellished with frescoes, paintings and mosaics. The Hall of Mirrors is especially breathtaking! In the city's Armenian quarter, you'll get the chance to delve more deeply into the region's complex history. Visit several churches in the area, including the 17th-century Vank Cathedral with its lavishly decorated interior and a unique blend of Islamic and European architectural elements.

Day 7: Esfahan

You have a free day to explore this lovely city, so take time to wander along the city's many tree-lined boulevards and spacious gardens. Visit the Jameh Mosque (Friday Mosque), the biggest in all Iran and full of lovely designed stuccos, or Afif Abad museum and garden, or you could also discover the bizarre Manar Jomban (shaking minarets). Perhaps head to the Armenian Quarter and the Church of St. Joseph of Arimathea, which has a striking interior of gilded ceilings, walls and paintings. The stunning, delicate artwork of the dome depicts the biblical story of Genesis, from Creation to Man's expulsion from the Garden of Eden. Make sure to take a stroll by the Zayandeh River and stop for a well-deserved chai at one of the stunning bridges.

Day 8: Isfahan – Kashan – Tehran

Drive to Kashan after breakfast. Visit the Abyaneh Village en route. The village is also known as the Red Village because of its red-mud houses (the area has red soil).



The houses of Abyaneh bear an ancient architectural style and feature the use of clay as the main construction material along with latticed windows and wooden doors.



On reaching Kashan, head for its two famous traditional houses, Boroujerdi or Tabatabaei. Travel to the Fin Garden, a UNESCO World Heritage site, This Persian garden reflects ancient landscaping principles that trace their roots to the time of Cyrus the Great in the 6th century BCE. Leaving Kashan behind in the evening and head for Tehran.

Salam! Welcome to Tehran. This marvellous city sits at the bottom of the Alborz Mountains – their snowy peaks serving as a photogenic backdrop for the colourful buildings below. Tehran is commonly known as one of the country’s most liberal metropolitan areas and this may become obvious through an adventure into the depths of their hospitality scene. Lamb, chickpeas, tahdig (crispy rice pies) and potatoes are all big staples in Iranian cuisine – just don’t forget they’re best washed down with a cup of dugh (minty yoghurt drink).

Upon arriving in Tehran, we go straight to the restaurant, once you arrive, get to know the other travellers over a juicy Iranian kebab served with a side of local bread or rice – the kebab’s rich aroma should have you smelling it well before it reaches the table. Once you’ve filled up, wash it all down with a cup of tea. After a delicious dinner we go to the hotel and crawl into bed before tomorrow’s adventures.

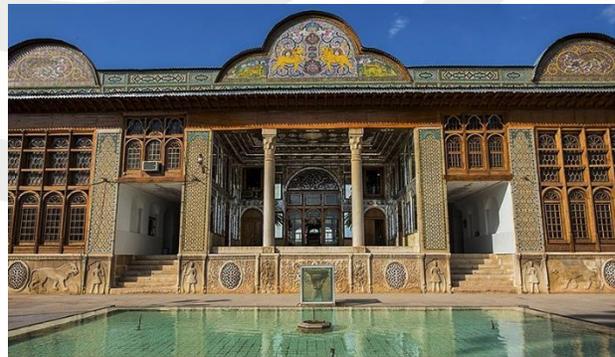


It’d be easy to call Iran a land of kebabs, but the country’s gastronomy is a little more complicated than that.

Day 9: Tehran

In the morning we will go to see National Museum of Iran, aging more than 70 years, containing 300,000 museum objects. Then we will have the visit of Iran Glassware and ceramic Museum, in order to see objects of 4th millennium B.C. up to the present time.

After that we will go to see a UNESCO World Heritage: Golestan Palace that has many places to offer: The Marble Throne, Karim Khani Nook, Museum of Gifts, Containers Hall, Mirror Hall, Salam Hall, Edifice of the Sun (Shams ol Emareh) and many other places. After that visit the fabulous State’s Jewels Museum, housed in the vaults of the Central Bank of Iran displaying the most dazzling and priceless collection of jewels and gems in the world.



We see more of Tehran today with full day visits including the Golestan Palace Museum Complex, built by Fath-Ali Shah of the Qajar Dynasty and dating from the 18th to the early 20th century. We continue to

the Shams-ol-Emareh (Sun) Palace and the Ethnographic Museum, with a walk around the garden to enjoy the beautiful tile-covered walls and buildings. In the afternoon, we visit the fabulous State's Jewels Museum, housed in the vaults of the Central Bank of Iran displaying the most dazzling and priceless collection of jewels and gems in the world.

Day 10: Tehran - Baku

Drive to the north of Tehran after breakfast. Get the chance to learn more about the Qajar and Pahlavi history in the Sa'dabad Palace Museum and we continue to the Niavaran Palace and the Tajrish Traditional Bazaar, the favourite shopping destination of the locals, transfer to the airport and fly to Baku. Arrive in Baku and transfer to your hotel.



Day 11: Baku - Absheron Peninsula

Explore Azerbaijan's capital, including the medieval fortress of Icheri Sheher, the Shirvanshahs' Palace and the 15th century caravanserai among other sites. From Baku we head to the Absheron Peninsula to visit the 'flaming mountain' of Yanardag, continuously alight with burning underground gases that seep through holes in the earth's surface. We then visit the Gala Museum, the 'fire-worshippers' temple of Ateshgah, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and continue to the medieval fortress at Amirjan before returning to Baku for the night.

Day 12: Baku – Lahij – Gabala

Today we will travel west to Gabala city. En route we visit the Diri Baba Mausoleum in Maraza and the Yeddi Gumbaz Mausoleum at Shamakha. We continue across the Muganly Pass, with great views of the mountains along the way. We have a stop at Lahic village, a historical ethnographic reserve with local people producing handcrafts and carpets. There are also metal engravers, ancient mosques, baths and beautiful cobbled streets with original



apartment houses in this ancient mountain settlement. From here continue to Gabala city.



Day 13: Gabala – Sheki

This morning we set off from Gabala to Shaki. The delightful town of Sheki is one of Azerbaijan's highlights. An important centre on the Trans-Caucasian trade routes, it was an independent khanate up until the 1820s and evidence of its former grandeur is not hard to spot. The splendid Khan's Palace was built in 1762 without the use of any nails and is

elaborately decorated with ornate patterns on its exterior. There are also a number of old caravanserais and mosques to explore. Sheki is a delight to wander around, with winding streets and traditional houses giving the feeling of yesteryear. From Sheki we take a trip to the nearby village of Kish with its interesting Albanian church.

Day 14: Shaki - Ganja – Naftalan

We head to Ganja, Azerbaijan's second city. Upon arrival visit the local bazaar, the 17th century mosque of Shah Abbas and the unique 'bottle house' a local building decorated with nearly 50,000 bottles. Our final destination for the evening is Naftalan.

Day 15: Naftalan-Gobustan-Baku

This morning we discover more about Naftalan and the oil for which it is famous before we then depart for Gobustan. Designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2007, Gobustan is rich in archaeological monuments with over 6000 rock engravings dating back as far as 40,000 years. The petroglyphs depict ceremonial dances, battles, warriors, boats and many other scenes, as well as more recent Roman 'graffiti' from the 1st century. But Gobustan is equally well known for its natural phenomena –



mud volcanoes that simmer and belch muddy bubbles from their cones, an incredibly atmospheric place and probably unlike anything you will have seen before. Azerbaijan is home to more than half of the mud volcanoes in the world with nearly 400 of them within its borders. Roughly every twenty years one of them explodes with great gusto, showering tons of mud over the surrounding area.

Day 16: Baku

Our last day in Azerbaijan. We visit the History Museum for an insight into the various cultures and civilisations that have held sway here. We also visit the Heydar Aliyev Center, designed by Iraqi-British architect Zaha Hadid, after visit this place, Transfer to the airport for departure.



WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Arrival and departure airport transfers
- 15 nights' accommodation in standard-grade hotels
- Breakfast & Dinner
- Land travel in Iran by air-conditioned coach
- Services of an experienced Iranian tour guide throughout the tour
- Meals: 15 breakfasts and 15 dinner
- entrance tickets according to the travel plan

WHAT'S EXCLUDED

- International air fares, taxes and surcharges
- Travel insurance
- Items of a personal nature such as laundry or phone calls
- Visa code application fees
- Tips to guides and drivers
- Visa costs

Important Note

- Please have in mind that in local house single rooms are not provided unless the client asks us for a single room. Also normally in local house, there are no beds.
- On sea trips in case of bad conditions of the sea the routes and timing may change
- In nature trips in case of climate changes and bad weather, changes in accommodation and programs may occur
- The booking process of the hotel starts upon receiving the flight details.
- Changes in the hotels may occur

Responsible Travel

As the executive of nature tours in Iran & Globe, we have assumed our responsibility & role so seriously, know the tourism effect on our surrounded environment & local society, and try to plan & operate our tours in accordance with this foreground thought; For, we believe that the tour executive has a great effect on the means of transferring his/her experiments, to guarantee both the passengers health & environment conservation.

Travel Tip: This tour is fully customizable and can be extended as per your specific touring needs. We can add, substitute or delete any touring site or city from the itinerary as required. Request us for a tailor-made itinerary.

Important:

In cities where there is no 5* hotel, we will have to stay in hotels with highest stars in that city.

HOTEL CATEGORY AND ACCOMMODATION

Cat.	Hotel Name	Location	Nights
5*	GRAND HOTEL	SHIRAZ	2
5*	SAFAIYEH	YAZD	2
5*	ABBASI	ISFAHAN	3
5*	ESTEGHLAL	TEHRAN	2
5*	QAFQA POINT	BAKU	3
5*	QAFQAZ TUFANDAG	GABALA	1
5*	SHEKI PALACE	SHAKI	1
5*	GARABAG RESORT	NAFTALAN	1