RETURN TO PERSEPOLIS

AN ESCORTED TOUR EXPLORING THE WONDERS OF IRAN

6TH TO 18TH OCTOBER 2018

NOBLE CALEDONIA
This unique journey takes in destinations that are rarely experienced by the Western visitor which makes it all the more special. Cyrus, Darius and Xerxes all belong to our cultural memory, as do their palaces and tombs and now it is again possible to visit the ancient land of Persia, a crossroad of Asia, with its infinitely varied countryside and outstanding monuments. It is the home of Shia and Sunni Muslims, fire-worshipping Zoroastrians, as well as Armenian Christians and Jews remaining from the days of the Babylonian Captivity.

The sparkling turquoise domes of Islam are equally renowned, especially those of Isfahan. Since the Islamic revolution, the country has rebuilt its tourist infrastructure and the visitor will find the sites virtually unchanged from earlier days. As well as Persepolis, we will visit Tehran, Shiraz – the ‘City of Roses and Nightingales’, the great desert city of Yazd – home of Zoroastrianism, and Isfahan - ‘Pearl of Persia’. We will stay in the best available hotels and the food will be traditional Persian cuisine.

**OUR VIEW**

“Noble Caledonia has a reputation for offering unique and fascinating trips all over the world and Iran is certainly one of them. We were fortunate enough to visit this amazing country in October 2016 with a group of well-travelled guests who were all looking for a unique and perhaps an unusual choice of destination. Iran is an amazing country with kind, generous and welcoming people, fascinating palaces and museums and diverse cities. Bustling Tehran has so many incredible places to visit such as the Sa’ad Abad Palace complex, one of the homes of the late Shah and also the stunning Goleston Palace with its silver and gold interior and beautiful gardens. You cannot help but marvel at the gems in the National Jewels Museum. The collection takes your breath away. Away from Tehran you have amazing archaeological sites such as the world famous Persepolis and others that are more or less on the brink of discovery. Visit Shiraz and the beautiful Eram Gardens with the glittering Palace standing proud, as though it is looking over and guarding the gardens. In Isfahan you can enjoy one of the largest public squares in the world, with its array of shops, mosques and restaurants. Take a walk here in the evening when the families are enjoying a stroll and you can imagine you’re in another world. Iran is welcoming guests with open arms and when you do visit this country you are treated as a ‘special guest’ and leave with memories that will never be forgotten.”

Peter Graham, Noble Caledonia Tour Manager

**THE ITINERARY**

**Day 1 London to Tehran, Iran.**
Fly by scheduled indirect flight.

**Day 2 Tehran.** Arrive early this morning and transfer to the Espinas Hotel for a two night stay. After a morning at leisure we will visit the National Museum of Iran, an excellent introduction to Iran’s rich history. We continue to Abguineh Glass and Ceramics Museum, one of the most impressive in Tehran, not least for its architecture from the Qajar period.

**Accommodation:** The Espinas Hotel is situated right in the heart of Tehran city centre. The superb location means the hotel is surrounded by Tehran’s most spectacular attractions. With great city views, the rooms offer spacious and comfortable accommodation with contemporary furnishings. The hotel also offers an indoor climate-controlled pool.

**Day 3 Tehran.** This morning we visit the Saad abad Palace complex with its many museums. The royals of the Qajar dynasty in the 19th century used this palace as their summer capital. The palace was then converted into many museums after the Iranian Revolution, including the military museum and the museum of calligraphy. After lunch we visit Golestan Palace in downtown Tehran with its renovated Versailles-inspired mirror-encrusted Marble Throne Hall used for the coronation of the last Shah. Most of the remaining brick and tile buildings date back to the 19th century Qajar dynasty. Lunch is followed by our final visit of the day which is to Iran’s National Jewels Museum in the Central Bank of Iran Building, with its vast array of crown jewels used by the Qajar and Pahlavid royalty.

**Day 4 Tehran to Shiraz.** Morning flight to Shiraz, the delightful ‘City of Roses and Nightingales’ for a three night stay in the Shiraz Homa Hotel. Shiraz has many strings to its bow: poetry, literature, wine, flowers and amazing gardens and fruit trees. A highlight of our tour is the Eram Garden, one of the oldest and the most beautiful gardens of Shiraz. This garden with the magnificent central building was once used as a place to receive foreign guests by the local chiefs of the Qajar dynasty and later by the Pahlavi kings.

**Accommodation:** The Shiraz Homa Hotel is situated next to Azadi Park, offering glorious mountain views. The property was formerly managed by Sheraton and offers a superior standard of accommodation. There are three restaurants (offering Iranian and

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**Persepolis**

**Isfahan**

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**www.noble-caledonia.co.uk**
Dried fruit

Day 5 Persepolis. We spend the day in the magnificent ruined city of Persepolis, the winter capital created by Darius in 512 B.C. and burnt by Alexander the Great in 331 B.C., perhaps accidentally in revenge for the destruction of Athens. The monumental staircase of the Palace has friezes of all Darius' vassal states. We also see the nearby Zoroastrian Fire Temple and the Royal rock tombs of Darius I and three of his successors at Naqsh-i Rustam and the rock reliefs of Sassanian Kings at Shapur I at Naqsh-i Rajab. En route back to our hotel we visit the Vakil Mosque, a beautiful mosque built in the mid-18th century by Karim Khan, Regent (Vakil) and the founder of Zand Dynasty and also take the opportunity for some shopping at the bazaar.

Day 6 Bishapur. Today's excursion takes us through the mountain passes, crossed by Alexander, to the Sassanian capital of Bishapur. Here we see the well-preserved palace complex founded in 266 A.D., the nearby Zoroastrian Fire Temple and the rock reliefs of Shapur I and his successors. Upon our return to Shiraz we will also see the tomb of Hafez which is the symbol of Shiraz as Hafez is the most famous and popular Persian poet of the 14th century and the Naranjestan Palace, a delightful Qajar pavilion set in an ornamental garden.

Day 7 Yazd. Today we embark on what will be a long but rewarding day's drive to Yazd, stopping to see the ruins of the first Archaemenid capital at Pasargadae, created by Cyrus the Great in 546 B.C. and including his austere tomb. Continue to Yazd, an important centre of Zoroastrianism, for a two night stay at the Hotel Moshir Al-Mamalek Garden.

Accommodation: The Moshir Al-Mamalek Garden Hotel was created within the garden and pavilions of a Qajar nobleman. The Hotel has considerable charm and character, and is a fine example of the traditional architectural style of Yazd. The ochre coloured property is a short drive from the centre of town and retains many original features dating from the 19th century. The property's 70 newly built air-conditioned rooms are simple in style and have been designed to fit in with the traditional surroundings. A highlight of the hotel is its extensive garden and orchard. Set within the garden are large benches covered with carpets which are the ideal place to relax at the end of the day. Hotel facilities include an internet station and Persian restaurant.

Day 8 Yazd. The Three Magi may well have travelled to Bethlehem from Yazd and Marco Polo passed through on his way to China. Today we will explore this desert city and see the Friday mosque of 1324, home to one of Persia's finest mosaics, the famous Water Towers and the old covered bazaars. We also see the Fire Temple and the 17th century Towers of Silence, where in accordance with Zoroastrian beliefs dead bodies were not buried but left in these uncovered stone towers so that vultures could pick the bones clean. Finally, we will visit the 18th century Dowlat-Abad garden complex and the Khan-e Lari, one of the best preserved Qajar-era houses in Yazd with stained glass windows and elegant archways.

Day 9 Isfahan. Another rewarding drive today during which we will stop for lunch to visit the 11th century Friday Mosque in Na‘in, an important trading post on the old Silk Route. We reach Isfahan, the ‘Pearl of Persia’ for a three night stay at the Abbasi Hotel.

Accommodation: The Abbasi Hotel is centred on a stunning 300 year old royal caravanserai. Formerly called the Shah Abbas Hotel, in honour of the Isfahan’s great 17th century ruler, the Abbasi has as its focal point a lovely Persian garden. Complementing the gardens are the Abbasi’s grand public areas which were designed to impress the last Shah of Iran’s guests. All rooms are equipped with individual climate control, satellite television, mini-fridge, and wireless internet access and facilities include a choice of restaurants, coffee shop, indoor swimming pool, currency exchange facilities and several shops.

Day 10 Isfahan. Today we explore Isfahan, one of the finest cities in the Islamic world, created by Shah Abbas the Great. This enchanting city, which served as Persia’s capital from 1598 to 1722, is 2500 years old and one of the oldest in Iran. As a crossroad of international trade and diplomacy, Isfahan has a rich mix of languages, religions and customs. We will visit the many splendid palaces, mosques and medresses built round the Naqsh-e Jahan Square which is the largest historical public square in the world after Tiananmen Square and is one of UNESCO’s World Heritage Sites. Our visit includes the magnificent Iman Mosque, the Chehel Sotun (Palace of forty columns) and Hasht Behesht, reportedly built for residence purposes of the King’s harem. We will end our visit with a stroll in the old bazaars.

Day 11 Isfahan. Today we will visit the Friday Mosque which can be seen as a stunning illustration of the evolution of mosque architecture over twelve centuries, starting in A.D. 841. It is the oldest preserved edifice of its type in Iran and a prototype for later mosque designs throughout Central Asia. Close by is the old Jewish colony of Yaduddiyeh which dates back 2700 years to the Jewish Captivity in Babylon. We also walk besides the three old bridges of Isfahan that span the Zayandeh-rud River. After lunch we visit New Julfa to explore the Armenian Quarter and Vank Cathedral which is the historic focal point for the Armenian church in Iran. The interior is richly decorated and shows a curious mixture of styles, Islamic tiles and designs alongside Christian imagery.

Day 12 Isfahan to Tehran. Today we drive to Tehran stopping at the village of Abyaneh and the town of Kashan en route. Overnight stay in an airport hotel.

Day 13 Tehran to London. Transfer to the airport for the return scheduled flight to London.

**PRICES PER PERSON**

Based on double occupancy

**Twin:** £4295  
**Single:** £5495

**PRICE INCLUDES:**  
- Economy class scheduled air travel  
- 11 nights hotel accommodation  
- All meals with soft drinks  
- Excursions  
- Tour Manager  
- Local guides  
- Gratuities  
- Entrance fees  
- Transfers  
- Airport taxes.

**Not Included:**  
- Travel insurance, visa  
- N.B. Itinerary subject to change based on local conditions. Please note that hotels used may vary but will be of a similar standard to those mentioned. Participants need to be aware that the consumption of alcohol is strictly forbidden in Iran and both men and women need to be conservatively dressed, with head scarves worn at all times by women.

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