



Iran: Art and Culture of the Persians 2020

21 OCT – 10 NOV 2020

Code: 22046

Tour Leaders **Dr Sophy Downes**

Physical Ratings 

Join Dr Sophy Downes and explore Persia's rich imperial heritage visiting Pasargadae, Persepolis, the cities of Shiraz and Isfahan, desert architecture of Yazd and Kerman, and Tehran's great museums.



Overview

- Travel with Persian archaeologist, [Dr Sophy Downes](#), Lecturer in Art History at John Cabot University, Rome and author of the upcoming book entitled *The Aesthetics of Empire in Athens and Persia*.
- Explore the grandeur of the ancient Persian empires at magnificent sites like Pasargadae, Persepolis and Bishapur.
- Visit the world heritage site of Takht-e-Soleyman ('Throne of Solomon'), located on a crater rim in West Azarbaijan.
- Follow the ancient caravan route down the Zagros range, a route also used by nomads for millennia.
- View the great Sassanian bas-reliefs at Bishapur and Taq-e-Bostan; and the Achaemenid relief and inscriptions of Bisotun – masterpieces of ancient art.
- Visit the Elamite Ziggurat of Chogha Zanbil which in scale and grandeur equals the early step pyramids of the Egyptians, and the nearby Biblical Tomb of Daniel.
- Marvel at the rich beauty of Shah Abbas' monumental Isfahan, such as his great square, the *meydan*, with two of the most beautiful mosques in the world.
- Encounter the unique vernacular desert architecture of Iran: an architecture of wind-towers, icehouses, qanats and underground dwellings in the region of Yazd and Kerman.
- Visit the Rayan Citadel, an impressive medieval, fortified, mud-brick town covering over 20,000 square metres and the nearby Sufi Shrine of Aramgah-e Sha Ne'matollah in Mahan.
- Wander through some of Iran's most famous gardens, which orchestrate shaped water with rich plantings.
- Enjoy some of the world's most exquisite tile work in mosques, madrasas and palaces from the 11th to the 19th century.
- Journey across some of the world's most sublime landscapes, framed by high, snow-capped mountains.
- Sample the delights of Iranian cuisine, in mouth-watering dishes like chicken in pomegranate sauce.
- Spend time in the old bazaars of Isfahan and Shiraz, where you can find an extraordinary range of Persian antiques, miniatures and carpets.
- Learn about the development of the Persian carpet in one of the world's most comprehensive collections.
- Visit the Reza Abbasi Museum, which holds one of the finest collections of Persian miniature paintings in the world; the Treasury of National Jewels, the centrepiece of which is the Peacock Throne; the Glassware and Ceramics Museum; and the National Museum of Iran, with spectacular pre- and post-Islamic collections.

Testimonials

'Welcome to Iran!' was the greeting we heard over and over again during a tour filled with varied sights and experiences. We travelled in comfort, seeing impressive and often grandiose scenery and monuments. Our leader and friendly guides told us a great deal about life in Iran, its history and the places we visited. Gail, NZ.

Why Iran? It is one of the great civilisations and cultures of the world. It has history, philosophy, academic rigour and religion across 2500 years. On tour, you find the people inquisitive, keen and enthusiastic to communicate and very hospitable. You learn of how a great culture develops, one that is rich in its fabric, knowledgeable in life structures, innovative in practical matters, and gifted in architecture and design. This is no ordinary tour, but a trip through history that informs and enriches. Neil, VIC.

This is the tour for everyone wishing to be immersed in the history, culture, religion, and people of Iran. Not only are the well-known sites visited, but also the lesser-known ones. The guides are excellently qualified and impart their extensive knowledge with empathy, humour, and detailed personal experience. Iran is a country of diverse geography, friendly people and an amazing civilisation. Heather, VIC.

21-day Cultural Tour of Iran

Overnight Tehran (2 nights) • Zanjan (2 nights) • Hamadan (1 night) • Kermanshah (1 night) • Ahvaz (2 nights) • Shiraz (4 nights) • Kerman (2 nights) • Yazd (2 nights) • Isfahan (3 nights) • Tehran (1 night)

Overview

Iran is a vast land composed of a high arid plateau bounded by mountain ranges. Its population comprises indigenous sedentarists of Aryan origin – the ancient Iranians – and incursive groups of Aryans, Arabs, Kurds, and Turkic peoples from the surrounding deserts, mountains and steppelands. Its position on the great trade routes from the Middle East to China and India encouraged the flourishing of civilisations. Under Cyrus the Great, the Persians established the Achaemenid empire and the great city of Persepolis. Their successors built the great Persian empires of classical antiquity. In the 7th century the Muslim Arabs conquered Iran but the Persian heritage survived, its language and culture reformulated in a new Islamic idiom. Iran subsequently became the heartland of the Indo-Persian Islamic world and incursive tribesmen, including the Mongols, seized power only to fall under the sway of Persian literature, architecture and painting, creating new models in the process. A particularly decisive moment occurred in the 16th century when the Safavids, a Persian lineage supported by Turcomen, made Shi'ite Islam the state religion, thus defining Iran as different to her Sunni neighbours.

Explore Iran's dynamic fusion of cultures on a tour offering awesome mountains and deserts, diverse art and architecture, teeming ancient bazaars and sophisticated cuisine. After visiting Tehran's world-class archaeological, carpet and glass museums, we skirt the Alborz Range westward to the Zagros Mountains, once home to the famed Assassins. At Soltaniyeh we view the great Mongol mausoleum crowned with one of the world's largest domes. We then traverse the Zagros' high, green valleys – famed in antiquity for their herds of sacred white horses – before exploring one of the world's oldest continuously inhabited cities at Hamadan, Biblical Ecbatana, home of an ancient shrine to Esther and Mordecai. Nearby we view an extraordinary Zoroastrian temple palace complex, holy shrine of Sassanian kings, sited in an eerie volcanic crater at Takht-e Soleyman. Our journey then follows an ancient trade corridor, used in prehistory and by the ancient Medes and Persians, that later became a trade route linking China and Central Asia to the Levant. We view the magnificent Achaemenid and Sassanian rock-cut reliefs: inscriptions ordered by Darius I at Bisotun, and coronation ceremonies with scenes of a boar and deer hunt at Taq-e-Bostan. Near Ahvaz, in the Mesopotamian plains, we encounter the Ziggurat at Chogha Zanbil – mighty temple of the ancient kingdom of the Biblical Elamites. Turning east through the high, verdant Zagros, we visit ancient cities of the mighty Achaemenid and Sassanian empires: lonely Pasargadae, city of Cyrus the Great; awesome Persepolis; and Bishapur, city of Shapur the Great, destroyer of Roman Emperors. In the eastern deserts beyond Shiraz, home of poet Hafez, city of nightingales and roses, are oasis trading cities of Kerman and Yazd – with unique desert architecture, including Zoroastrian towers of silence, pisé and brick shrines, mosques, icehouses, wind-towers and desert fortresses. We skirt Iran's desert plateau northwards, through the trading cities of Ardestan and Natanz, to Isfahan, capital of Safavid ruler Shah Abbas. Here we view the exquisite Lotfollah Mosque, epic Shah Mosque, the atmospheric Grand Bazaar and Ali Qapu Palace gatehouse – all enclosing his extraordinarily beautiful Meydan Square.

Food & Photography

As well as an in-depth exploration of the art, architecture and culture of diverse Iranian peoples, this tour offers the opportunity to visit a variety of landscapes that will capture the heart of any photographer. The visual diversity of Iran is perhaps greater than any other country visited by ASA. Participants interested in photography should note that memory sticks, good quality film, batteries and other camera equipment are difficult to purchase in Iran. You should therefore ensure that you bring adequate supplies. Follow the basic principle: you are sure to take more pictures than you think.

Participants interested in culinary arts will also be surprised by the sophistication and diversity of Iranian cuisine. Fresh produce from local bazaars is used to create dishes that are an integral part of the Iranian cultures, and regional specialties are highly prized. On the majority of days through this tour we have organised lunches and evening meals so that participants can sample the best food that Iran has to offer. Fresh dates, dried figs, pistachio nuts and shortbread biscuits filled with dates, cinnamon and nuts, are offered as travelling food on the road. Our Iranian guide will help you explore the regional specialties offered at local restaurants wherever we dine. Each day offers something different, so that you can discover your own favourites!

Leaders



Dr Sophy Downes

A classicist turned Persian archaeologist, Sophy wrote her PhD on the comparison of architecture and politics at Persepolis and on the Athenian Akropolis. She is currently a Lecturer in Art History at John Cabot University, Rome, Italy. She leads ASA's tour to Iran in 2020.

Sophy Downes is a classical archaeologist, whose research interests have led her continuously further east, to Turkey and eventually Iran. She initially studied Classics at Oxford; she then did a MPhil at Cambridge, focusing on the funerary monuments of Western Anatolia in the Classical period. After living for a couple of years in Rome, she returned to the Institute of Archaeology in London, where she wrote her PhD thesis, a comparative study of the architecture and politics of Persepolis and the Athenian Akropolis. She first visited Turkey in 2000 and Iran in 2002, and has returned numerous times to both, including to take up a residential postdoctoral fellowship at the British Institute of Persian studies in Tehran. She has published on both Classical and Near Eastern archaeology, and her book *The Aesthetics of Empire in Athens and Persia* is forthcoming. She was also a finalist for the Bradt Travel Awards for a piece about her experiences with fortune telling in Esfahan, which was subsequently published in *Traveller's Tales*. Her current research is on spatial analysis of Persepolis, notably the way in which the current reconstruction of the site obscures its original architectural logic. She has taught at University College London and at Edinburgh and is currently delighted to be a Lecturer in Art History at John Cabot University, Rome, Italy.

Combine this tour with

Roman Algeria, the Sahara & the M'Zab Valley 2020

27 SEP – 17 OCT 2020

Great Libraries and Stately Homes of England 2020

5 OCT – 20 OCT 2020



Itinerary

The detailed itinerary provides an outline of the proposed daily program. Participants should note that the daily activities described in this itinerary may be rotated and/or modified in order to accommodate changes in museum opening hours, flight schedules etc. Meals will be taken in hotels, in restaurants with a historical or local flavour, or picnic lunches will be provided. All meals are included in the tour price and are indicated in the itinerary where: B=breakfast, L=lunch and D=evening meal.

Tehran - 2 nights

Day 1: Wednesday 21 October, Arrive Tehran

- Carpet Museum
- Welcome Dinner

We arrive in Tehran on flight EK971 in the early morning. After transferring to our hotel there will be time to rest before we visit Tehran's magnificent Carpet Museum. This collection documents carpets from all regions of the country and many periods in its history. Here you may begin to build in your mind a vocabulary of Persian motifs which will recur throughout your tour in miniatures, architectural decoration and garden design. Tonight we dine together at the hotel's restaurant. (Overnight Tehran) LD

Day 2: Thursday 22 October, Tehran

- National Museum of Iran
- Glassware and Ceramics Museum
- Coach orientation tour of Tehran

This morning we shall visit the National Museum of Iran which is the combination of two museums, the old Archaeological Museum and the modernistic white travertine museum of the Islamic period*. In the former you will be introduced to the prehistory of Iran and the cultures of the Elamites, Achaemenians, Seleucids,

Parthians and Sassanians in small artefacts as well as monumental sculpture. In the Islamic Museum*, on the other hand, you will encounter the Persian contribution to Islam in a huge collection of metalwork, calligraphy, ceramics, brickwork and textiles, glass and especially miniature paintings. Highlights include the beautiful Paradise Door, a 14th-century lustre-painted *mihrab* (niche in a mosque indicating the direction of Mecca) from Qom, and a 19th-century inlaid door from Esfahan. In the afternoon we shall tour the city and visit its excellent glass museum which holds a very fine collection from the medieval period to the present. (Overnight Tehran) BLD

* The Islamic section of the National Museum is currently closed.

Zanjan - 2 nights

Day 3: Friday 23 October, Tehran – Qazvin – Soltaniyeh – Zanjan

- Imamzadeh-ye Hussein, Qazvin
- Jami' Mosque, Qazvin
- 'Ali Qapu, Qazvin (exterior)
- Mausoleum of Soltaniyeh

This morning we drive to Qazvin which is claimed to have been founded by the Sassanian King Sapur I (3rd c. BC) and, being situated on the route to north-western Iran, rose to prosperity under the Seljuks. They built fine buildings many of which were, however, destroyed by earthquakes. Qazvin again rose to prominence under the Safavid Shah Tahmasp but was eclipsed when Shah 'Abbas moved his capital to Isfahan. It was also favoured by the Qajars, especially Fath 'Ali Shah, who repaired much earthquake damage in the 19th century. The city's four-*iwan* Jami' Mosque has many later accretions but its great dome chamber is very early (1115 AD). Decorative wall surfaces in parts of this mosque such as the prayer hall *iwan* are of an intricate brick pattern, or plaster work mimicking brick construction. The revelation of the structural nature of a wall or other element is a typical Seljuk feature.

The only major surviving structure of the early Safavid period is the 'Ali Qapu, which, like its namesake in Isfahan, was the entrance to Qazvin's royal palace (which was destroyed by earthquakes). Built by Shah Tahmasp, it was enlarged by Shah 'Abbas, the creator of Isfahan.

The Imamzadeh-ye Hussein is the shrine of the son of the 8th Imam. Built to the order of the daughter of Shah Tahmasp (1501), it was considerably enlarged in 1630 and then was heavily renovated by the Qajars (1779-1924) who added the façade of the central dome chamber.

After lunch in Qazvin, we drive to the Mongol city of Soltaniyeh ('Town of the Sultans'). Here we shall visit the Gonbad Soltaniyeh the great mausoleum of the Mongol Sultan Oljeitu Khodabande, which has one of the largest domes in the world. This mausoleum was originally intended for the earthly remains of Ali, son-in-law of the Prophet, but this never eventuated and so became the sultan's own tomb (c.1317). This is a masterpiece of Islamic tomb construction that looks forward to the monuments of Mughal India, especially the Taj Mahal. It consists of an immense octagon surmounted by a gallery that hides the springing of its great dome. At each corner of the octagon were constructed high minarets, an instance of how this architectural form, ostensibly serving the call to prayer, became a decorative feature used to monumentalise an important edifice. After thoroughly exploring this great tomb we continue to the city of Zanjan. (Overnight Zanjan) BLD

Day 4: Saturday 24 October, Zanjan – Takht-e Soleyman – Zanjan

- Takht-e Soleyman, Takab ('Throne of Solomon')

Today we make an excursion from Zanjan to the remote archaeological site of Takht-e Soleyman, in a volcanic region (altitude 2400 metres) of the great Zagros mountains. Takht-e-Soleyman, surrounded by a great battlemented wall, centres on a volcanic crater filled by a hidden spring to form a deep, blue lake; in deep antiquity it was considered a 'portal' to the underworld, and it became one of the most important Zoroastrian sanctuaries in Persia. Surrounding this lake are an extremely important Zoroastrian sanctuary that was partly rebuilt in the Ilkhanid (Mongol) period (13th century) and a Sassanian fire temple (6th and 7th centuries) dedicated to Anahita, as well as a Sassanian palace. When the Arabs invaded Sassanian Persia in the 7th century the site was given a new, biblical, meaning as the 'Throne of Solomon'; the Zoroastrians may have done this to save it from destruction by the invaders. The fire temple, palace and the general layout of the complex strongly influenced the development of Islamic architecture. From this extraordinary site you will also see another volcanic crater, Zendan-e Soleyman (the Prison of Solomon), where the biblical king was believed to have imprisoned monsters. (Overnight Zanjan) BLD

Hamadan - 1 night

Day 5: Sunday 25 October, Zanjan – Hamadan

- Archaeological Site of Ecbatana
- Tomb of Esther and Mordechai
- Alavian Tomb Tower (Gombad-e Alavian)
- Tomb of Ibn Sina (Avicenna)
- Stone Lion
- Ganjnameh (inscriptions of Darius I and Xerxes)

This morning we drive from Zanjan to the city of Hamadan, where we spend the rest of the day visiting major sites. Ecbatana, also known as Hegmatana, was the capital of the Median Empire (7th c. BC) and after the 6th century triumph of the Achaemenids, in the 5th century it became a summer capital of the Achaemenid kings. It later became a Seljuk capital, was sacked by the Timurids, and revived by the Safavids.

We shall explore the extensive archaeological site of Ecbatana, and visit the tomb of the great medieval philosopher Ibn Sina (c. 980-1037), known in the West as Avicenna, whose philosophy influenced such great thinkers as Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas. Born near Bukhara, he found patrons among the Samanids of Bukhara and Buyids of Qazvin, Esfahan and Hamadan. Ibn Sina is considered the greatest polymath of the Islamic Golden Age, which revived and interpreted Greek philosophy, particularly the work of Aristotle, transmitting it to later ages. He wrote on philosophy, logic astronomy, alchemy, geology, psychology, Islamic 'theology', physics and mathematics, and was a poet.

We shall also visit the tomb of Esther and her cousin Mordechai. Esther, of the *Biblical Book of Esther*, was purportedly the wife of Xerxes I, and saved her people from genocide. Jews consequently revere her and make pilgrimage to her tomb. The Alavian Tomb, which we also visit, was the Seljuk (12th century) mausoleum of the Alavian family. We shall also view the stone sculpture of a lion that was carved, it is believed, to honour one of Alexander the Great's fallen generals.

Five kilometres to the southwest of Hamadan, we shall view the Ganjnameh ('Treasure Epistle'), consisting of two great inscriptions carved in granite on the side of the Alvand Mountain. Darius the Great (521-485 BC) ordered one inscription and his son Xerxes (485-465 BC) the other. Both inscriptions, carved in three ancient languages (Old Persian, Neo-Babylonian and Neo-Elamite begin with praise of Ahura Mazda and then describe the lineage and deeds of these two kings. (Overnight Hamadan) BLD

Kermanshah - 1 night

Day 6: Monday 26 October, Hamadan – Kangavar – Bisotun – Kermanshah

- Temple of Anahita, Kangavar
- Achaemenid Relief and Inscriptions, Bisotun

Today we drive west from Hamadan to the beautiful mountain ringed Kurdish city of Kermanshah. Our itinerary follows the ancient caravan route, a southwestern extension of the Silk Route from China. Our first stop along the way is in the small city of Kangavar, originally a Parthian centre, with a temple to the Aryan goddess of water, fertility, healing and wisdom, Anahita. The Greek geographer Isidore of Charax mentioned a 'temple to Artemis' in this region in his *Parthian Stations* (c. 29 AD), describing the overland route from the Levant to India; in antiquity Artemis was associated with Anahita. Whether or not this is the temple mentioned by Isidore, it is an imposing structure on a high plinth with monumental columns, with Achaemenid and Sassanian sections.

Our next stop is at Bisotun to see the grand bas-relief and cuneiform inscription ordered by Darius I on his accession to the throne of the Persian Empire (521 BC). It portrays Darius holding a bow, a sign of sovereignty, standing on the chest of Gaumata, the Median Magus and pretender to the throne whose assassination led to Darius's rise to power. Below and around the bas-reliefs are inscriptions in three languages recounting the battles Darius waged in 521-520 BC against the governors who attempted to dismember Cyrus the Great's Empire. Of the accompanying inscriptions the oldest is in Neo-Elamite, the second in Neo-Babylonian and the last in Old Persian. This is the earliest of such Achaemenid inscriptions, and the first in which inscriptions describing great deeds are associated with monumental relief carving. (Overnight Kermanshah) BLD

Ahvaz - 2 nights

Day 7: Tuesday 27 October, Kermanshah – Taq-e-Bostan – Pol-e Dokhtar – Ahvaz

- Sassanian Reliefs, Taq-e-Bostan
- Sassanian Bridge, Pol-e Dokhtar

Today we drive down from the Zagros Mountains to Ahvaz near the Persian Gulf. Our first visit is to the magnificent Sassanian rock cut reliefs at Taq-e-Bostan, some of the finest of all monumental Sassanian relief sculptures. Set within rock-cut *iwans*, the reliefs depict the coronation ceremonies of Ardashir I and his son Shapur I, Shapur II and Khosrau II. The monumental reliefs are set at the back of these *iwans*, and on both sides of one *ivan* there are monumental reliefs depicting a boar and deer hunt. In the vivid boar-hunting scene, five elephants flush out the fleeing boars from a marshy lake for the king who stands poised with bow and arrow in hand whilst being serenaded by female musicians. In the next scene, a second boat carries female harpists and the king who has killed two large boars. In a third boat the king, stands with a semicircular halo carrying a loose bow signifying the end of the hunt. Below, elephants retrieve the dead boar and sling them onto their backs. This is truly one of the masterpieces of ancient art.

Next, at Pol-e Dokhtar, we shall encounter the remains of a grand Sassanian bridge. Late in the day we drive through an extraordinary long valley carved by an ancient glacier that etched vast 'surreal' curved veins into the bare rocks of the valley's walls. (Overnight Ahvaz) BLD

Day 8: Wednesday 28 October, Ahvaz – Susa – Chogha Zanbil – Shushtar – Ahvaz

- Achaemenian capital of Shush, Susa
- Tomb of Daniel, Susa

- Elamite Ziggurat of Chogha Zanbil
- Sassanian Bridges: Shardovan and Band-e Kaisar, Shushtar
- Shushtar watermills
- 9th century Masjid-e Jami, Shushtar

We are now in ancient Elam, the kingdom of the Achaemenians' forerunners. From the 3rd millennium BC until the rise of Cyrus the Great, south-western Iran was referred to in Mesopotamian sources as 'the Land of Elam' and the name persisted as late as 1300 AD in the records of the local Nestorian Church. 'Elam' covers a variety of mini-regions and a multiplicity of communities who seem to have been swallowed up by the Achaemenian Empire yet were powerful enough to attack Babylon in the centuries before the coming of Christ.

Shush (Susa) was originally an Elamite city. It was burnt by the Assyrian king Ashurbanipal (c.640 BC) and replaced by Darius I, who built the Achaemenian city whose remains now occupy the site. It was his winter residence and must have rivalled Persepolis – which it would have resembled – in its heyday. We shall visit the site which has the impressive foundations of Darius' Palace and a number of beautiful sculptural fragments – including capitals and some animal figures. Nearby is a fortress built by the French Archaeological Survey in the 19th century to fend off Arab attacks.

We shall also visit the great Elamite Ziggurat of Chogha Zanbil which in scale and grandeur equals the early step pyramids of the Egyptians and the ziggurats of Ancient Mesopotamia.

Susa was sacked by Alexander the Great but survived to become an important centre of Christianity under the Sassanids (224-642 AD). At the centre of the modern town of Susa, below the ancient city, is the Tomb of Daniel, which remains an extremely important Muslim shrine. Architecturally, this shrine (14th-19th century) is significant for its conical *muqarnas* dome, similar to those of Iraq and Syria; its tile-work and sparkling mirror mosaic also parallel those of nearby Iraq.

In the afternoon we shall drive to the nearby city of Shushtar, which has the substantial remains of two Sassanian bridges, the Shardovan and Band-e Kaisar, and a group of fascinating functioning Sassanian watermills. If possible, we shall also see the 9th-century Masjid-e Jami (Friday Mosque), which is particularly notable as one of the very few pre-Seljuk mosques to be found in Iran. It follows the Middle Eastern trabeated form, the *iwan* mosque being a later development. (Overnight Ahvaz) BLD

Shiraz - 4 nights

Day 9: Thursday 29 October, Ahvaz – Bishapur – Shiraz

- Bishapur (Bas Reliefs & Sassanian City)

We drive today westwards to Shiraz and on the way stop at the ruined Sassanian city of Bishapur. Here we shall visit a number of buildings, including the Zoroastrian fire temple of the type which was to influence the development of the Iranian *iwan* mosque, and the Palace of Shapur. There are also the remains of one of the earliest mosques in Iran which, like that of Shushtar, is of the Middle Eastern trabeated form. There is also a prison used to house Romans defeated by the Sassanians. These captives laboured to build the city and assemble floor mosaics which are obviously of the Roman type. The ruins are overlooked by extraordinary rock formations. Adjacent, in a small river valley, are a number of huge Sassanian reliefs cut into the living rock of towering, sheer cliffs. Carved in emulation of their Achaemenid predecessors, they depict the *Victory of Shapur over Valerian*, *Philip the Arab and Gordianus*, the *Coronation of Bahram*, the *Victory of Bahram over the Arabs*, and the *Bringing of Camels to Bahram*. In the afternoon we continue to

Shiraz. (Overnight Shiraz) BLD

Day 10: Friday 30 October, Shiraz

- Eram Garden
- Tomb of Saadi
- Pars Museum, Nazar Garden
- Arg-e Karim Khan (exterior only)
- Aramgah-e Hafez (tomb of Hafez)
- Shah Cheragh

Shiraz is capital of the south Iranian region of Fars, originally the core of the Achaemenian Empire. It is located on a narrow basin high (c. 2500m) in the Southern Zagros, in the shadow of yet higher mountains. It is approached through very dramatic, narrow gorges which have been used as trade routes for millennia. Its agricultural hinterland, for which it serves as the market, is home to the Qashgha'i and Khamseh peoples. It gave its name to the grape (Syrah) for which it is justly famous. Shiraz is probably of Achaemenian foundation like its two great neighbours, Pasargadae and Persepolis, but is not mentioned in sources until the Islamic period (c.693). It benefitted from trade (and its strategic position) between the cities of inner Iran (eg. Isfahan) and the south coast, and avoided destruction by the Mongols and Timur. On the contrary, it prospered under the Il Khanids (1256-1353) and Timurids (1370 -1506), becoming a great centre of the arts and learning, the birthplace of two of Iran's most famous poets, Sa'di (c.1207-1291) and Hafis (1324-1389). It suffered great vicissitudes, however, such as major earthquakes, (from which Isfahan has been spared), and was eclipsed somewhat under the Safavids (1501-1732). Nevertheless, its architectural culture was still vibrant enough to produce Ostad Isa, architect of the Taj Mahal. It became capital of Iran for a short time under the Zand dynasty (1750-1794) which was from this region. Under Zandian rulers such as Karim Khan (Regent: 1750-1779) it gained many beautiful buildings and the gardens for which it was famous.

We shall spend the day visiting major monuments in Shiraz. We begin with a visit to one of the gardens for which Shiraz was renowned, the Eram Garden, graced by avenues of large trees, a 19th century pavilion, and a rose garden. Nearby is the Tomb of Saadi. Abu-Muhammad Muslih al-Din bin Abdallah Shirazi, better known by his pen-name as Saadi, was one of the major Persian poets of the medieval period. He is not only famous in Persian-speaking countries, but he has also been quoted in western sources. He is recognised for the quality of his writings, and for the depth of his social and moral thoughts.

The old Nazar Garden was one of the largest formal gardens in Shiraz during Safavid rule (1501–1722). During the Zand dynasty (1750–1794) Karim Khan built an octagonal structure which was called Kolah Farangi or 'Foreigner's Hat'. It was used to receive and entertain foreign guests and ambassadors and hold official ceremonies. Today the pavilion houses the Pars Museum and is the final burial place of Karim Khan Zand. The pavilion features exquisite brick designs, tiling, pictures and carved stone dadoes. Nearby we also visit the Aramgah-e Hafez (tomb of the Persian poet, Hafez) who's legacy in modern Iranian literary culture is as significant as Chaucer, Shakespeare and William Blake's in the English speaking world.

Our day concludes with a visit to the Shah Cheragh, a funerary monument and mosque housing the tomb of the brothers Ahmad and Muhammad, sons of Musa al-Kadhim and brothers of 'Ali ar-Ridha. The tombs became celebrated pilgrimage centres in the 14th century when Queen Tashi Khatun erected a mosque and theological school in the vicinity.

Shah-é-Chéragh is Persian for 'King of the Light'. The site was given this name due to the discovery of the site by Ayatullah Dastgha'ib. He saw light glowing from a distance and decided to investigate, discovering sunshine emanating from a grave. The grave was excavated, and a body wearing armour was discovered.

The body also wore a ring saying al-'Izzatu Lillah, Ahmad bin Musa, meaning "The Pride belongs to God, Ahmad son of Musa". This was the burial site of the sons of Musa al-Kadhim. (Overnight Shiraz) BLD

Day 11: Saturday 31 October, Shiraz – Pasargadae – Persepolis – Naqsh-e Rostam – Shiraz

- Pasargadae
- Persepolis
- Achaemenian dynastic tombs, Naqsh-e Rostam
- 'Ka'bah-i Zardust ('Cube of Zoroaster'), Naqsh-e Rostam

Today we drive to the heartland of Ancient Persia and visit two great Achaemenian capitals, Pasargadae and Persepolis. The former was the city of Cyrus the Great; his massive tomb remains intact among its evocative ruins. Standing upon a high, square plinth, this grand, simple gabled stone structure is silhouetted against the mountains. With the Islamisation of Iran, this tomb came to be reinterpreted as the resting place of Mader-i-Suleiman, Solomon's mother.

Most of the day will be spent exploring Pasargadae's magnificent successor, Persepolis, the ceremonial city of Darius I, 'the Great' (522-485 BC). The city rests upon a massive three-tiered platform, the back of which is cut into a spur of the mountain, Kuh-i Rahmat. It was at this huge ritual city – it comprises a series of palaces, throne and audience halls and has no residences other than those of its kings – that the various peoples of the Achaemenian Empire gathered to pay homage and offer tribute to the King of Kings. This probably occurred each spring, at the time of the ancient Now Ruz (New Year). The climax of your visit will be the superb sculpted friezes lining the base of the Great Audience Hall, which depict processions of representatives of the subject states. Here, among others, are to be seen Ethiopians, Libyans, Drangians, Arabians, Sogdians, Indians, Parthians, Gandarians, Bactrians, Egyptians, Scythians and Greeks, all in their national dress, sporting characteristic coiffure, and carrying products of their various lands. Although Persepolis is said to have been burned by Alexander the Great, (possibly in revenge for the firing of the Athenian Acropolis), much of it remains and it has been carefully restored. We shall visit such areas as the Great Audience Hall (Apadana); the Hall of One Hundred Columns; the Palace of Xerxes; the Palace of Darius; the Tripylon, and the Royal Treasury.

After Persepolis, we shall drive to the nearby tombs at Naqsh-e Rostam, believed to be those of the Achaemenian rulers Darius I (522-485 BC), Xerxes (486-465 BC), Artaxerxes (465-424 BC), and Darius II (423-404 BC). The compositions of the majestic façades of these tombs, which are cut into the living rock of the cliff face, echo the façades of Achaemenian palaces. Bas-reliefs adorning them depict representatives of vassal nations supporting the king's platform on which he stands in worship before a fire altar, facing Ahura Mazda, whose winged symbol floats above. Nearby are earlier Elamite reliefs obscured by the later works, and Sasanian examples. These demonstrate the perseverance of the sacred status of the site which in its power, grandeur and majesty parallels Petra in Jordan. At Naqsh-e Rostam, in front of the tombs, we shall explore the great cuboid structure which has variously been described as a Zoroastrian fire temple, a provisional tomb used whilst the rock hewn sepulchres were being prepared, and a repository for royal standards and sacred texts. The composition of this building's façades suggests three storeys, but this is not the case. The façades are graced with inscriptions in Pahlavi, Sassanian, Parthian and Greek. (Overnight Shiraz) BLD

Day 12: Sunday 1 November, Shiraz

- Madrasa-ye Khan
- Masjid-e Atigh (with Khodakhune)
- Masjid-e Nasir al-Molk (Pink Mosque)

- Narenjenstan (Orangery)
- Masjid-e Vakil (Regent's Mosque)
- The Vakeel Bazaar of Shiraz

The citadel walls built by Karim Khan dominate the city centre, being part of a complex intended to rival the Safavid palaces of Isfahan. In 1627 Imam Gholi Khan founded a great madrasa (Madrasa-ye Khan) and invited Sadr-al-Din Širazi (Molla Sadra) to teach there. This theological school features exquisite tiles with calligraphy and floral motifs.

Shiraz has a number of very important mosques and shrines including the Masjid-e Atigh, of early foundation (894 AD) but mainly of Safavid construction, which houses the beautiful mid-14th century Khodakhune (House of God), originally a repository for precious Qu'rans. We shall also visit the Masjid-e Nasir-al-Molk, or Pink Mosque named for its highly decorated tiles of which the dominant colour is pink.

In order to gain a feel for the domestic life of Shiraz's merchant class we shall also visit the 19th century Narenjenstan (Orangery), a very beautiful house and garden originally belonging to the Ghavam family. Its courtyard is lined with colourful painted friezes and its main porch fronts a room covered with scintillating mirror mosaic.

After lunch we visit the Masjid-e Vakil (the Regent's Mosque) built by Karim Khan (1773) which has vast north and south iwans, a fine *mihrab* and grand *minbar*.

Our day ends with some time at leisure to explore the Vakeel Bazaar of Shiraz, located in the historical center of the city. The market was originally established by the Buwayhids in the 11th century AD, completed mainly by the Atabaks of Fars, and renamed after Karim Khan Zand in the 18th century. The bazaar has beautiful courtyards, caravansarais, bath houses, and old shops which are deemed among the best places in Shiraz to buy all kinds of Persian rugs, spices, copper handicrafts and antiques. (Overnight Shiraz) BLD

Kerman - 2 nights

Day 13: Monday 2 November, Shiraz – Sarvestan – Kerman

- Sassanian Palace, Sarvestan

Today we drive to Kerman, which is one of a number of oasis trading centers which border the great desert region of Iran, the Shahr-i-Lut. In the morning we shall stop at the small Sassanian palace, built by Bahram V (420-440 AD), at Sarvestan. This building presages much in Iranian Islamic architecture. For example, it has triple *iwans* on its façade and squinches support its domes. One unique feature is the brick pillars upon which one of its domes rests. Oleg Grabar has argued that this building may be a type of shrine modelled upon a palace. As we drive east we approach the most arid part of Iran. You will see great salt lakes like those of Central Australia, set in massive tracts of desert with a backdrop of high mountains. Every now and then you may see caravanserais, which were crucial to the abundance of trade across this forbidding landscape. (Overnight Kerman) BLD

Day 14: Tuesday 3 November, Kerman – Mahan – Rayan – Kerman

- Gunbad-e Jabalye, Kerman
- Aramgah-e Shah Ne'matollah Vali (Sufi shrine), Mahan
- Bagh-e Shahzade gardens, Mahan

- Rayan Citadel

Today we drive south-west to the Sufi shrine of Aramgah-e Shah Ne'matollah Vali in Mahan. On the outskirts of Kerman we first encounter the Gunbad-e Jabalye (Jabal-i Sang) or 'Mountain of Stone'. This domed octagon is one of the most majestic buildings of Iran. Neither its exact date nor purpose are known; it is probably from the late 12th century. At Mahan we visit the lovely 15th-19th century shrine complex of Nur ad-Din Ne'matollah, famous poet and mystic, who died here in 1431. Members of the Sufi order he founded visited the shrine which was begun in the 15th century with courts added by the Qajars in whose reign he was particularly venerated. Its magnificent tiled dome was begun by Sha 'Abbas in the late 16th century. Before leaving Mahan we shall visit a particularly large and beautiful walled garden, the Bagh-e Shahzade, with characteristic water courses and pavilions; its layout echoes that of a Persian carpet and foreshadows your visit to the palace precinct of Isfahan.

We then drive out from Mahan to the ancient citadel of Rayan. Founded in the in the Sassanian period, it is square in plan and has sixteen watch-towers and very high walls. Like so many citadel cities in the Persian and Central Asian tradition, it is divided into three different sections. The first is an urban area, in which merchants and artisans lived. The second was for the military and the third, the royal palace. Iran's unique religious history is reflected in the fact that there are a mosque, madrasa and Zoroastrian fire temple in the urban precinct. There is also an old cemetery (Early Islamic period) outside the citadel with the ruins of an early caravanserai next to it. (Overnight Kerman) BLD

Yazd - 2 nights

Day 15: Wednesday 4 November, Kerman – Yazd

- Moayedi Ice House
- Mushtagh Ali Shah
- Masjid-e Jami
- Masjid-e Imam
- Hammum-e Ganj 'Ali Khan
- Chaykhune-ye Vakil Teahouse in the Bazar-e Vaikl
- Caravanserais between Kerman and Yazd

Kerman is located 1722 metres above sea level in the lee of the Zagros, which nearby rises to an altitude of 3962 metres. Reputedly founded by Ardashir I in the 3rd century, Kerman was an important station on the trade routes between Central Asia and Khurasan in the north, and the Gulf of Persia to the south. When Marco Polo visited the city in 1271, it was supplementing its activity as a major emporium with the manufacture of harnesses, armour, and turquoise jewellery. Kerman, however, suffered from its remote location in south-western Iran. It was sacked by Timur and constantly threatened by the armies of neighbouring Afghanistan, as well as by dynasties like the Qajars. It nevertheless became an important centre of the Muzafarids (1314-1393) and its Masjid-e Jami, which has changed little since its construction, best demonstrates their introduction of overall tile decoration of an expanded colour range; they added green, brown and golden yellow to the spare use of light and dark blue, white and black that characterised Il Khanid buildings.

We also visit the unusual Moayedi Ice House with its high wall in the shadow of which ice formed, and the Mushtagh Ali Shah, a Qajar shrine for two saints whose double domes have fine tiles modelled upon the dome of the nearby Aramgah-e Shah Ne'matollah Vali complex in Mahan. Kerman also boasts a fine 19th century caravanserai which reflects the wealth garnered by the city. It has colourful tilework and two very distinctive *badgirs* (wind-towers).

The 17th-century Ganj 'Ali Khan complex in Kerman comprises a mosque, madrasa, hammam and caravanserai with exquisite tile mosaics; the floral designs, flying cranes and swooping phoenixes of its *iwan* arch spandrels echo carpet designs of the time. The Masjid-e Imam was constructed in the Seljuk period (1051-1220) but has been much altered since. Here we shall visit the interesting Hammam-e Ganj 'Ali Khan which has fine vaulting, and lunch in the distinctive Chaykhune-ye Vakil Teahouse in the Bazar-e Vaikl. The trade which coursed through the region led to the construction of many caravanserais in the desert. We shall visit two particularly noteworthy examples on our way to Yazd. (Overnight Yazd) BLD

Day 16: Thursday 5 November, Yazd

- Towers of Silence
- Ateshkade (Zoroastrian Temple)
- Masjid-e Jami
- Mausoleum of Sayyed Rokne-e-Din
- Alexander's Prison
- Tomb of the Twelve Imams
- Mahmoudi House
- Amir Chakhmagh Complex (Bazaar and Masjid-e Takyeh)
- Baq-e Doulat
- Khan Hammam

We begin our program in Yazd with a visit to the Zoroastrian so-called 'Towers of Silence' where until recently the Zoroastrians exposed the corpses of their dead to be picked clean by the vultures to avoid defiling the earth. This custom is still practiced in India by the Parsi sect who migrated there from Persia in the 8th century to avoid Islamic hegemony.

We next visit the functioning Zoroastrian Temple of Yazd (Ateshkade) in which an eternal flame, said to have burned continuously since antiquity, still glows.

The Masjid-e Jami (Friday Mosque) of Yazd gained its basic form under the Muzaffarids (1324-1365), but many elements of its decoration such as the main *iwan* façade date from the Timurid period (1442). Its entrance *iwan*, reconstructed in the 15th century, is covered with fine tiles, has high, slender proportions, and is flanked by two towering minarets. The main *iwan* façade is one of the glories of Yazd, its rich mosaic tile decoration culminates in a magnificent canopy of tiled *muqarnas*. Either side of the *qibla* dome are found innovative side oratories; although some believe they derive from Sassanian palaces. They are well-lit by high windows, are a brilliant white, and therefore make the central domed hall much lighter than those of most Iranian mosques.

Nearby is the small mausoleum of the scientist Sayyed Rokne-e-Din which may be entered by men and women on consecutive days. The interior of this small shrine of the 14th and 15th centuries has exquisite calligraphy.

We walk on to the prison purportedly built by Alexander the Great which has an interesting display showing the history of Yazd and then visit the Tomb of the Twelve (Shi'ite) Imams, none of whom are actually buried here. The building is from the Seljuk period (1038-1194) and is adorned with remnants of fine examples of Kufic calligraphy.

We then visit the 19th-century Mahmoudi House and the Amir Chakhmagh Complex, said to have been designed by the wife of Chakhmagh. It has a small bazaar and mosque (Masjid-e Takyeh). Nearby is a large wooden palm *nakhl*, used during passion plays (*ta'ziyeh*: mourning of the dead) which re-enact the murder

of Imam Hussein, grandson of the Prophet. These plays may, however, be based upon pre-Islamic festivals.

We shall also visit 17th-century Bah-e Doulat, residence of the former ruler Karim Khan Zand, which is renowned for having the highest *badgir* (wind-tower) in the city, and the Khan Hammam, originally the bath house of the main caravanserai, now functioning as a teahouse. (Overnight Yazd) BLD

Isfahan - 3 nights

Day 17: Friday 6 November, Yazd – Na'in – Ardestan – Isfahan

- Three caravanserais (25km south of Na'in)
- Sassanian Castle, Na'in (exterior only)
- Masjid-e Jami, Na'in
- Pirniya House & Kavir Museum, Na'in
- Masjid-e Jami, Ardestan

Today we drive northwest to Isfahan via Na'in. On the way, we shall stop at three old caravanserais. These inns for wayfarers, like those we visited near Yazd, served the trade route from Isfahan to the south.

In Na'in we visit one of Iran's oldest mosques. Na'in is an ancient city dominated by its Sassanian citadel. Its Masjid-e Jami was begun in the middle of the 10th century. It originally followed the Middle Eastern schema of a trabeated mosque but unlike its Syrian, Egyptian and North African counterparts, its roof was carried by piers and arches. Iran lacked the antique columns found everywhere in the Mediterranean world after the collapse of the Roman Empire, which were used by early mosque builders. Its courtyard façade is decorated with magnificent simple brick patterns. Another distinctive element in the complex is the underground mosque beneath the ablutions courtyard. This sheltered those in prayer from the heat of summer days. Nearby is the Pirniya House, a small palace which holds an interesting ethnographic museum displaying such arts as the weaving of camel hair.

After lunch in Na'in, we drive north to Ardestan to visit one of Iran's earliest four-*iwan* mosques. We then drive east to Isfahan and check in to Iran's most magnificent hotel, situated in a converted Safavid caravanserai. (Overnight Isfahan) BLD

Day 18 & 19: Saturday 7 & Sunday 8 November, Isfahan

- Imam Khomeini Square
- 'Ali Qapu Palace
- Masjid-e Sheikh Lotfollah
- Masjid-e Imam
- Masjid-e Jami (Friday Mosque)
- Bazaar
- Shahrestan, Khaju & Si-o-Se Bridge
- Vank Cathedral
- Chehel Sotun Museum & Park
- Pigeon Houses
- Chube Bridge

Isfahan ('troop assembly point') occupies a strategic node at an altitude of over 2000 metres on the Zayandeh Rud (river) between the Zagros and the central desert. It stands on the main communication routes south from Tehran and Qom and southwestward to the head of the Persian Gulf. Known as Gabal by

the Achaemenians and Jay by the Sassanians, who made it a garrison town, it became two settlements under the Arabs. The Buyids united both communities with new walls in the 10th century. Some of its earliest monuments are Seljuk (11th century). It suffered little destruction from Chingiz Khan (1235). Timur, after punishing it for revolting, then added to its fine architectural patrimony in the 14th century. From a regional centre of government with an international reputation in trade and industry it was elevated to the status of royal capital by the Safavid Shah 'Abbas I (1591). It suffered eclipse when the Zands (1750-1794) moved their capital to Shiraz and the Qajars established theirs in Tehran. Isfahan's historical importance and location in an earthquake-free zone have bequeathed it a fine architectural heritage. Its labyrinthine Friday Mosque is of particular importance because it incorporates elements from nearly all major periods and is therefore a veritable text book of Iranian architectural history. The great urbanistic and architectural enterprises of the early Safavids, on the other hand, demonstrate a magnificent unity of purpose and planning. The Meydan Square, mosques, palace pavilions and bridges of this enterprise constitute the apogee of Islamic architectural design and urbanism.

We spend two days visiting monuments from all periods with special emphasis upon the Friday mosque and the Meydan (Imam Khomeini Square), which incorporates on one side the grand entrance to the bazaar; on another the beautiful Masjid-e Sheikh Lotfollah, the private oratory of Shah 'Abbas I; on the third the splendid Masjid-e Imam, the pinnacle of the development of the Persian mosque, and on the fourth the 'Ali Qapu. The last of these served both as a triumphal entrance to the Royal Palace and a pavilion from which the court could watch military parades and polo games taking place in the massive square below.

We shall see how Shah 'Abbas I drew the centre of the city from the Friday Mosque which is at the other end of the bazaar to this great ensemble and how he and his successors flanked it with a magnificent palace precinct in which we shall visit such lovely pavilions as the Chehel Sotun. Its great porch is, like the 'Ali Qapu, supported by tall wooden columns (a rarity in Iran) and its interior is graced with fine wall paintings. The Chehel Sotun stands in a magnificent garden area which is laid out in the plan of a great carpet.

We also visit a number of Isfahan's beautiful bridges, designed as places of recreation as well as corridors linking city precincts, and the Christian quarter, a specialised precinct developed by the Safavids for Isfahan's Armenian minority. It centres on the magnificently decorated Vank Cathedral. We shall spend much time exploring Isfahan's rich bazaar and look at the city's vernacular architecture, including its distinctive pigeon houses. (Overnight Isfahan) BLD

Tehran - 1 night

Day 20: Monday 9 November, Isfahan – Natanz – Abyaneh – Kashan – Tehran

- Masjid-e Jami, Natanz
- Village of Abyaneh
- Bagh-e-Fin (Fin Garden), Kashan

We depart early this morning for Tehran. Our first stop is the city of Natanz, where we visit the Masjid-e Jami. We then drive into the mountains to the foot of Mount Karkas, to the tiny unchanged village of Abyaneh, with its distinctive red hued walls, which was purportedly the last place in Iran to convert to Islam. We shall walk through the main street, destitute of young people (who have all left for the big cities), possibly encountering old people in traditional dress and viewing the distinctive vernacular architecture. We shall also visit Imamzade-ye Yaha and Zeyaratgah shrines. An Imamzade is a descendent of the Prophet and this name is also applied to his or her tomb. This small complex has a lovely pool at its centre.

From Abyaneh we continue our journey north to Kashan to visit the Bagh-e-Fin, a palace that combines the architectural features of the Safavid, Zandiyeh and Qajar periods. It is famous for its abundant water-supply (Cheshmeh Sulaimani), a garden thick with trees, a pool with numerous spouts, and an old historical bathing-house (where Amir Kabir was murdered).

On our way to Tehran we shall also drive past Qom which, with Mashad, is the holiest shrine city of Iran. In 816 Fatima, sister of Imam Riza who is buried at Mashad, died in Qom, and ever since this has been a great centre of pilgrimage. The great shrine complex which we cannot, unfortunately, visit, was built between the 16th and 19th centuries. One dome was decorated by Shah 'Abbas I, builder of Isfahan. The other was clothed in gold in the 19th century by the Qajars, as was their practice. (Overnight Tehran) BLD

Day 21: Tuesday 10 November, Depart Tehran

- Reza Abbasi Museum
- The Treasury of National Jewels
- Airport transfer for participants departing on the ASA 'designated' flight

This morning we will visit one of Tehran's greatest museums, with arguably one of the finest collections of Persian miniature paintings in the world. It is named after a great painter of the Safavid period and contains exquisitely beautiful jewellery, pottery and paintings from as early as the 14th century.

In the late afternoon we visit the great Treasury of National Jewels, which contains Imperial crown jewels of Iran, the centrepiece of which is the Peacock Throne. The extraordinary display of jewellery, bejewelled clothes and furniture is almost overwhelming.

The tour ends in Tehran. In the evening participants travelling on the ASA 'designated' flight will transfer to the airport to take their flight home to Australia. Alternatively, you may wish to extend your stay in Iran. Please contact ASA if you require further assistance. BL

Accommodation

21-day Cultural Tour of Iran

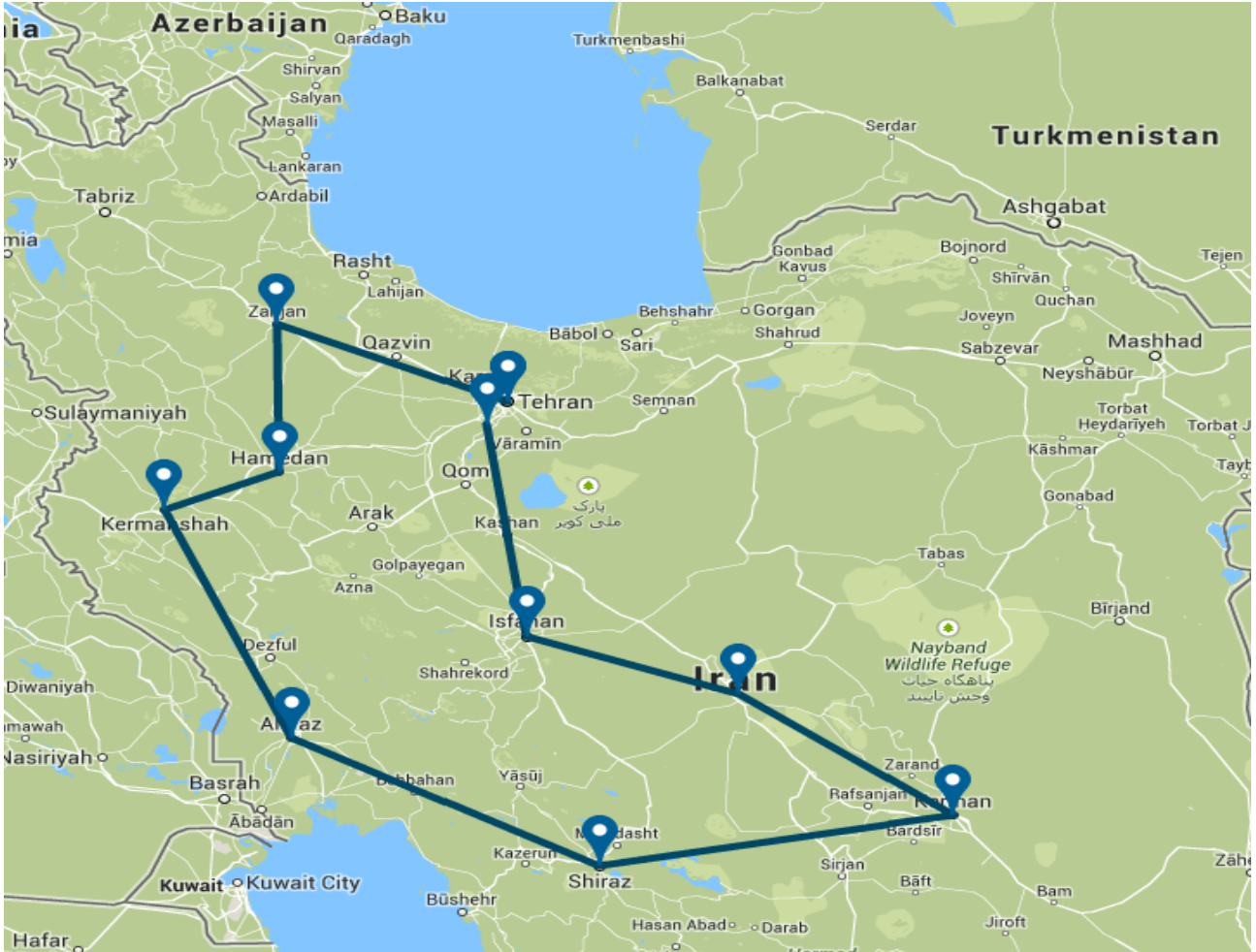
All hotels are rated 4- or 5-star locally (except in Yazd, where the hotel is of a good 3-star standard) and are comfortable and conveniently situated. All rooms have en suite bathroom. A highlight of the tour will be our stay in the exquisite Abassi Hotel in Isfahan, originally a caravansarai dating from the Safavid period. Single rooms may be requested – and are subject to availability and payment of the Single Supplement. Further information on hotels will be provided in the 'Tour Hotel List' given to tour members prior to their departure.

- Tehran (2 nights): 5-star Laleh International Hotel – located in the Laleh Park area, 750m from the Carpet Museum, offering 380 air-conditioned rooms equipped with en suite bathroom, satellite TV, 24-hour room service, minibar and telephone. www.lalehhotel.com
- Zanjan (2 nights): Grand Hotel Zanjan – a relatively new hotel built on the outskirts of Zanjan offering 54 air-conditioned rooms with en suite bathroom, TV, minibar and direct-dial telephone. www.zanjangrandhotel.com
- Hamadan (1 night): 4-star Baba Taher Hotel – recently renovated hotel in the city centre, offering 91 air-conditioned rooms with en suite bathroom, satellite TV and minibar. (no website available)
- Kermanshah (1 night): 4-star Parsian Hotel – offering 100 air-conditioned rooms equipped with en suite bathroom, satellite LCD TV, minibar & direct-dial telephone. www.parsianhotels.com
- Ahvaz (2 nights): 4-star Pars Hotel – located on the banks of the Karoon river (the longest river in Iran); offering 140 air-conditioned rooms equipped with en suite bathroom, satellite TV, minibar and direct-dial telephone. www.pars-hotels.com (in Farsi only)
- Shiraz (4 nights): 5-star Pars International Hotel – offering 188 rooms equipped with en suite bathroom, direct-dial telephone, TV, safe, wireless internet and minibar. www.pars-international-hotel.com
- Kerman (2 nights): 5-star Kerman Pars Hotel – offering 170 rooms equipped with en suite bathroom, direct-dial telephone, satellite TV, Wi-Fi and minibar. parshotels.apochi.nl/hotel/kerman-pars-hotel
- Yazd (2 night): 3-star Tourist Inn – offering 36 rooms equipped with en suite bathroom, TV & minibar. (no website available)
- Isfahan (3 nights): charming 5-star Abassi Hotel – located within easy walking distance of the Meydan (Imam Khomeini Square), is housed in a Safavid caravanserai which has been beautifully restored by Persian craftsmen. The hotel consists of 220 rooms equipped with en suite bathroom, TV, minibar, telephone & hairdryer. abbasihotel.ir/en
- Tehran (1 night): 5-star Laleh International Hotel – located in the Laleh Park area, 750m from the Carpet Museum, offering 380 air-conditioned rooms equipped with en suite bathroom, satellite TV, 24-hour room service, minibar and telephone. www.lalehhotel.com

Note: Hotels are subject to change. In this instance a hotel of similar standard will be provided.

Iran is only beginning to develop its tourism industry, so it is very exciting to visit, but you may experience some difficulties with practical tasks. For example, it may not always be possible to make international telephone calls from your hotel room and not all hotels have facilities for changing foreign currency.

Tour Map



Tour Price & Inclusions

AUD \$10,680.00 Land Content Only – Early-Bird Special: Book before 30 September 2019

AUD \$10,880.00 Land Content Only

AUD \$1940.00 Single Supplement

For competitive Economy, Business or First Class airfares please contact ASA for further information.

Tour Price (Land Content Only) includes:

- Accommodation in twin-share rooms with en suite bathroom in 4- and 5-star hotels (except in Yazd, where the hotel is 3-star)
- All meals, indicated in the itinerary, where: B=breakfast, L=lunch & D=evening meal
- Transportation by air-conditioned coach
- Airport-hotel transfers if travelling on the ASA 'designated' flights
- Porterage of one piece of luggage per person at hotels (not at airports)
- Lecture and site-visit program
- Tour Handbook
- Entrance fees
- Bottled water during all meals and during site excursions
- Tips to the coach driver, Iranian guide and restaurants for included meals

Tour Price (Land Content Only) does not include:

- Airfare: Australia-Tehran, Tehran-Australia
- Beverages with meals
- Personal spending money
- Airport-hotel transfers if not travelling on the ASA 'designated' flights
- Luggage in excess of 20kg (44lbs)
- Travel insurance
- Iranian Visa



Physical Endurance & Practical Information

Physical Ratings 

The number of flags is a guide to the degree of difficulty of ASA tours relative to each other (not to those of other tour companies). It is neither absolute nor literal. One flag is given to the least taxing tours, seven to the most. Flags are allocated, above all, according to the amount of walking and standing each tour involves. Nevertheless, all ASA tours require that participants have a good degree of fitness enabling 2-3 hours walking or 1-1.5 hours standing still on any given site visit or excursion. Many sites are accessed by climbing slopes or steps and have uneven terrain.

This 21-day Cultural Tour of Iran involves:

- Walking across uneven terrain, climbing up slopes or steps.
- Extensive coach travel (ranging from 2-10 hrs per day).
- Regular early-morning starts and long days.
- Female participants wearing a headscarf, long-sleeved shirt, trousers, and a trenchcoat (to the knee) in public at all times.

Other considerations

- 3- to 5-star hotels with nine hotel changes.
- You must be able to carry your own hand luggage. Hotel portage includes 1 piece of luggage per person.
- Rudimentary facilities during some road journeys.
- Alcohol is strictly prohibited.

It is important to remember that ASA programs are group tours, and slow walkers affect everyone in the group. As the group must move at the speed of the slowest member, the amount of time spent at a site may be reduced if group members cannot maintain a moderate walking pace. ASA tours should not present

any problem for active people who can manage day-to-day walking and stair-climbing. However, if you have any doubts about your ability to manage on a program, please ask your ASA travel consultant whether this is a suitable tour for you.

Please note: it is a condition of travel that all participants agree to accept ASA's directions in relation to their suitability to participate in activities undertaken on the tour, and that ASA retains the sole discretion to direct a tour participant to refrain from a particular activity on part of the tour. For further information please refer to the ASA Reservation Application Form.

Visa Requirements

Australian, New Zealand and British passport holders will require a visa for Iran. ASA will assist tour members in obtaining their visa. Application forms will be forwarded to tour members in due course.

Practical Information

You will receive prior to departure practical notes which include information on visa requirements, healthcare, photography, weather, clothing and what to pack, custom regulations, bank hours, currency regulations, electrical appliances, food, local customs and religion.

- Area: 1,648,000 sq. km (642,720 sq. miles)
- Population: 82 million
- Capital city: Tehran (pop. = 8.5 million)
- People: Persian (Farsis) (65%), Azari (25%), Arab (4%), Lors (2%), Turkmen (2%), Kurdish, Armenian, Jewish
- Language: Persian
- Religion: Shi'ite Muslim
- Government: Islamic Republic
- Spiritual leader: Ayatollah Sayyed Ali Khamenei
- President: Hassan Rouhani, who assumed office on 3 August, 2013

The major religion in Iran is Shi'ite Islam which pervades all aspects of life. The essence of Islam is the belief that there is only one God, and that it is the people's duty to believe in and serve Him in the manner that is laid out in the Qu'ran. In Arabic, Islam means submission and a muslim is one who submits to God's will.

Clothing for Women: The most visible daily expressions of Iran's Shi'ite Islam are the modest dress code, and rules for behaviour at mosques. Women will be required to wear a headscarf, long-sleeved shirt, trousers, and a trenchcoat (to the knee) at all times. During visits to some mosques women will also be required to wear a special robe provided at the entrance. ASA strongly recommends that female participants wear a scarf and Iranian *mantos* for the duration of the tour, as this clothing, made primarily of cotton, is very light and more comfortable to wear than the coats you are likely to bring from Australia. Participants will therefore have the option to go 'manto shopping' on the first day after visiting the Carpet Museum or on the second day after visiting the Glass Museum. **Note:** you will still need to bring one scarf, and a suitable coat from Australia to enter the country.

Clothing for Men: Men are also required to dress conservatively. We request that you wear trousers and shirts (with either long sleeves or half-sleeves – no singlets!). Shorts are not permitted. As indicated in the itinerary, daily excursions usually involve walking outdoors; light walking shoes are therefore essential.

Language: The national language of Iran is Persian, also known as Farsi, an Indo-European language. The

other main regional languages are Azari, Kurdish, Arabic and Lori (spoken by the Lors); and there are dozens of other tongues throughout the 26 provinces, such as Gilaki, Baluchi and Turkmen. The Arabic script was adapted to Persian after the introduction of Islam, but there is no standard method of transliterating Persian into English.

Food: Iranian cuisine is heavily based on rice, bread, fresh vegetables, herbs and fruit. Meat, usually lamb or mutton minced or cut into small chunks, is used either to add flavour, or is the dominant ingredient (eg. kebabs). The national drink of Iran is chai (tea), always served scalding hot, black and strong. All sorts of delicious fresh fruit juices, milkshakes and yoghurt drinks are available throughout Iran. Alcohol is strictly forbidden. Do not bring any into Iran!

Travellers Cheques/Credit Cards: Tour members should bring US dollars in cash. Don't bother taking travellers cheques of any denomination or currency. Credit cards are generally not accepted, with the exception of a few carpet shops in Isfahan.

Further information

Tour members will receive prior to departure practical notes which include information on visa requirements, health, photography, weather, clothing and what to pack, custom regulations, bank hours, currency regulations, electrical appliances and food. The Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade website has advice for travellers: www.smarttraveller.gov.au

Booking Conditions

Make a Reservation

ASA RESERVATION APPLICATION FORM

Please complete the ASA RESERVATION APPLICATION and send it to Australians Studying Abroad together with your non-refundable deposit of AUD \$500.00 per person payable to Australians Studying Abroad.

Passport Details

All participants must provide no later than 75 days prior to the commencement of the program a photocopy of the front page of their current passport.

Single Supplement

Since 2013, in response to the increase in travellers visiting Iran and limited hotel accommodation, some hotels no longer offer double rooms for single use. Payment of this supplement will secure a double (or twin) room for single use throughout the tour except in Ahvaz where rooms are extremely limited. The number of rooms available for single occupancy is extremely limited. People wishing to take this supplement are therefore advised to book well in advance.



Reservation Application

TOUR NAME _____

TOUR DATES _____

Please complete **one application, per person in block letters and sign**. Parental signature is required for participants under 18 years of age. Please mail this form with the appropriate deposit to: **P.O. Box 8285, ARMADALE, VICTORIA, 3143**. On receipt of this Reservation Application and deposit, ASA will process your booking and if approved, send you a tour confirmation.

Applicant Details (as in passport)

TITLE Mr Mrs Ms Miss Dr Other _____

FIRST NAME _____ Preferred FIRST NAME _____

MIDDLE NAME _____ SURNAME _____

POSTAL ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ COUNTRY _____ POSTCODE _____

TEL. (AH) () _____ TEL. (BH) () _____ Mobile Tel: _____

EMAIL address _____

Date of birth / / _____ GENDER Male Female

Passport Number _____ Expiry date / / _____ Nationality _____

Colour copy of my current valid passport enclosed I'm renewing my passport ASA has a colour copy of my current passport

Travel Plans

I wish ASA to book my airfare, please contact me to discuss my options. Business Class Economy Class

I plan to leave Australia before the tour commences. Planned departure date / / _____

I will be arranging my airfare independently and taking the Land Content Only option.

Frequent Flyer _____ Name of Airline _____ Airline Seat preference _____
Membership # _____ (please note request only)

Tour Accommodation (rooming preferences)

I/we would like: a twin-bedded room a double-bedded room a room for sole occupancy

I am travelling: on my own with a friend/family member Travel Companion _____

Meals

I do not have any specific dietary requests

Please **X** the box if you **CAN NOT** eat any of the following:

fish poultry red meat dairy products

eggs pork nuts

Allergies: Refer to the Medical Information

Other _____

Correspondence

Your preferred method of correspondence Postal Mail Email Address _____

Emergency Contact Details

Note: this person **MUST** be available by telephone and be present in Australia for the duration of your tour with ASA

Name _____ Relationship to Traveller _____

Address _____

TEL. (AH) () _____ TEL. (BH) () _____ Mobile Tel: _____

EMAIL address _____

The purpose of seeking this information is to assist ASA to determine, where necessary, whether ASA is able to make reasonable adjustments to accommodate your specific needs and whether your health and safety (or that of your fellow travellers) is likely to be compromised given your choice of tour. It will also assist you and ASA if you fall ill or have an accident whilst travelling.

- ASA reserves the right to decline your Reservation Application if this Medical Information section is not completed properly and may reject or cancel your reservation, or terminate your participation on any tour, if ASA subsequently learns that you have failed to make full and proper disclosure.
- ASA is committed to protecting the privacy of your personal information. ASA's privacy policy is available for viewing at www.asatours.com.au
- If ASA has any concerns about the information you have provided, it will contact you to request clarification before considering your Application.
- ASA requires you to consider carefully your limitations in light of ASA's Physical Endurance Star Rating System in ASA's Brochure and Itinerary when choosing your tour.
- If you are not likely to satisfy ASA's Participation Criteria (see below), ASA, in its sole discretion, may reject your Reservation Application.
- It is a condition of your tour that you agree to accept the directions of ASA's Tour Leaders in relation to your suitability to participate in activities planned on tour.
- ASA reserves the right to cancel your participation on a tour if your behaviour is in ASA's opinion causing undue distress or damage to any person or their property.
- If your participation is discontinued during a tour, ASA will assist by arranging your onward travel (if required) at your own cost, but you will not be refunded for forfeited parts of the tour.
- ASA tour groups are not accompanied by a medical practitioner. ASA recommends that you see your doctor for advice about your specific needs while overseas. You may also wish to contact a travel and vaccination clinic for advice. www.traveldoctor.com.au tel: 1300 658 444; www.travelvax.com.au tel: 1300 360 164.
- Travel insurers require you to declare all existing medical conditions.
- Please carry a complete list of medications with you during the ASA tour. Include **generic names** of each medication (consult your local pharmacy for information).

Please mark **X** in the YES or NO box to every question below and provide details where necessary:

Participation Criteria

To participate in an ASA tour, you must be reasonably fit, in good health and able to participate in all activities without assistance from Tour Leaders or other tour members. If you require assistance, a fit and able travel companion must undertake to accompany and assist you with all tasks for the duration of the whole tour. The responsibility of the Tour Leader is to ensure that the larger group enjoys a relaxing and informative journey, and he or she cannot be relied upon to provide ongoing individual assistance to any one guest.

- | | YES | NO |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Can you walk and stand unassisted for at least 2-3 hours a day in hot, humid conditions? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 2. Can you walk unassisted on and over uneven surfaces? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 3. Can you climb at least 3 flights of stairs and/or walk up and down steep slopes unassisted? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 4. Can you walk at a steady pace and no less than 1km every 15 - 20 minutes unassisted? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 5. Can you organise, manage and carry your own luggage? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 6. Can you follow and remember tour instructions and meet punctually at designated times and places? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 7. Can you administer your own medication? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 8. Do you have impaired vision or hearing which may impact your capacity to participate on this tour? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Mobility and Fitness

As many of ASA's international sites do not provide access to wheelchairs or similar mobility aids, we regret that ASA tours are not suitable for people who require the use of a walking frame, wheeled walker, wheelchair or motorised scooter.

1. Do you suffer from any medical conditions that may compromise your mobility and/or fitness to participate on this program? YES NO
 If yes, please specify

If yes, how will you manage this on tour?

Allergies and/or Food Intolerances

ASA will make reasonable endeavours to organise meals to suit you, provided that you give ASA adequate notice of your specific dietary requirements or allergies. You may be required to research dietary alternatives, as not all destinations may be able to offer suitable food substitutes.

1. Do you have any food allergies or intolerances? YES NO
 If yes, please specify

2. Have you ever had an anaphylactic reaction to anything? YES NO
 If yes, please specify

Do you carry an epipen? YES NO

3. Do you have any other allergies or reactions to anything, including medical drugs? YES NO
 If yes, please specify

Existing Medical Conditions

You alone are responsible for managing any existing medical conditions, your medication and any medical equipment that you may need when on your tour. Please plan for contingencies and take extra medication, dietary supplements and/or fully charged batteries for medical equipment if your health and safety depends on these. You should take into consideration that power sources at some destinations may be unavailable, inadequate, inconvenient or unreliable.

1. Have you any significant medical conditions that may impact your capacity to complete this tour? YES NO
 If yes, please specify

If yes, how will you manage this on tour?

2. Do you require some form of powered medical aid, such as a CPAP machine? YES NO

These machines may not be operable on certain international flights, modes of transport, in remote or other areas with inadequate or unreliable power sources without a fully charged independent long life battery or batteries.

Diabetics: You may be travelling and sightseeing for many hours at a time. Insulin dependent diabetics must carry extra supplies of insulin (as this medication cannot be obtained in some destinations), regulators, applicators, storage and refrigeration equipment, as well as any necessary supplements. Accommodation may not provide refrigerators in rooms.

3. Are you diabetic? YES NO

Are you insulin dependent? YES NO

4. Do you suffer from travel sickness? YES NO
 Remember to use an appropriate medication while on tour.

Declaration

I declare that: I have read and understood the ASA Tour Itinerary, Reservation Application and Booking Conditions. I am aware of ASA's terms as relating to refunds, cancellations, responsibility and liability. I understand that ASA relies upon this declaration when considering this Application. I accept that there are inherent dangers and risks that may occur during any tour. I have made full and complete disclosure and have not knowingly withheld any medical information about myself from ASA. I have completed this Reservation Application honestly and accurately. I warrant that I am able to participate independently in all activities described by ASA in the itinerary without assistance from any person.

I will advise ASA in writing if any aspect of my fitness and or health conditions change materially at any time before my departure date. I understand and accept that the itinerary, accommodation and lecturers scheduled for this tour may change.

I agree and consent that ASA may give my personal information in this Reservation Application to tour service providers and relevant authorities as required by law, but for the purpose of making bookings with and engaging services provided for the tour. I understand that if I do not consent to the use of my personal information for this purpose, ASA will decline my Reservation Application.

In consideration of ASA's acceptance of my Reservation Application, I irrevocably release and indemnify ASA from all claims that I, or any other party, may have against ASA its employees, invitees, agents and contractors, however arising in respect of any loss, damage, injury, death or expense incurred in the course of travelling to, on and from any tour.

I understand and acknowledge that this Release and Indemnity applies with respect to:

1. Every general risk to which I or my personal belongings may be exposed in the course of travelling to, on or from any ASA tour
2. Every special risk, in particular medical risks, to which I may be exposed in the course of travelling to, on or from any ASA tour arising from, including, but not limited to:
 - a. intermittent power cycles and/or the temporary or permanent loss of power (beware CPAP or any other medical machine users);
 - b. dietary, food or other allergies (ASA cannot guarantee that traces of items to which you are allergic are not present in food or drink you are served, medication you are administered or other substances with which you may come into contact);
 - c. any event or situation that may compromise the administration of necessary medication or my health, safety and wellbeing generally.
3. All claims arising as a result of my or ASA's cancellation or termination of my continued participation on a tour for whatever reason (refund conditions in ASA's Booking Conditions excepted).

Limitation of Liability

ASA is not a carrier, event or tourist attraction host, accommodation or dining service provider. All bookings made and tickets or coupons issued by ASA for transport, event, accommodation, dining and the like are issued as an agent for various service providers and are subject to the terms and conditions and limitations of liability imposed by each service provider. ASA is not responsible for their products or services. If a service provider does not deliver the product or service for which you have contracted, your remedy lies with the service provider, not ASA.

ASA will not be liable for any claim (eg. sickness, injury, death, damage or loss) arising from any change, delay, detention, breakdown, cancellation, failure, accident, act, omission or negligence of any such service provider however caused (contingencies). You must take out adequate travel insurance against such contingencies.

ASA's liability in respect of any tour will be limited to the refund of amounts received from you less all non-refundable costs and charges and the costs of any substituted event or alternate services provided. The terms and conditions of the relevant service provider from time to time comprise the sole agreement between you and that service provider.

ASA reserves the sole discretion to cancel any tour or to modify itineraries in any way it considers appropriate. Tour costs may be revised, subject to unexpected price increases or exchange rate fluctuations.

Booking Conditions

DEPOSITS

A deposit of \$500.00 AUD per person is required to reserve a place on an ASA tour.

CANCELLATION FEES

If you decide to cancel your booking the following charges apply:

More than 75 days before departure: \$500*
75-46 days prior 25% of total amount due
45-31 days prior 50% of total amount due
30-15 days prior 75% of total amount due
14-0 days prior 100% of total amount due

This amount may be **credited to another ASA tour departing within 12 months of the original tour you booked. We regret, in this case early-bird discounts will not apply.*

We take the day on which you cancel as being that on which we receive written confirmation of cancellation.

UNUSED PORTIONS OF THE TOUR

We regret that refunds will not be given for any unused portions of the tour, such as meals, entry fees, accommodation, flights or transfers.

WILL THE TOUR PRICE OR ITINERARY CHANGE?

If the number of participants on a tour is significantly less than budgeted, or if there is a significant change in exchange rates ASA reserves the right to amend the advertised price. We shall, however, do all in our power to maintain the published price. If an ASA tour is forced to cancel you will get a full refund of all tour monies paid. Occasionally circumstances beyond the control of ASA make it necessary to change airline, hotel or to make amendments to daily itineraries. We will inform you of any changes in due course.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

ASA requires all participants to obtain comprehensive travel insurance. A copy of your travel insurance certificate and the **reverse charge** emergency contact phone number must be received by ASA no later than 75 days prior to the commencement of the tour.

FINAL PAYMENT

The balance of the tour price will be due 75 days prior to the tour commencement date.

PLEASE READ THE ABOVE CAREFULLY, PRINT AND SIGN BELOW

I accept the conditions on this booking form I have read the information about the physical requirements of the tour in the detailed itinerary and confirm that I am able to meet these requirements

Applicant's Signature

Print Full Name

Dated

Tour / Course Name

Name of Traveller 1

Name of Traveller 2

I have enclosed a payment to the value of \$

 (including CC or bank fee if applicable) for this tour

The above amount is payable for:

- Intention to Travel Tour Deposit
- Balance of Payment Upgrade from Intention to Travel to a Deposit
- Travel Insurance Other (eg. Airfares, Accommodation)

International Payments

Welcome to our international travellers! If you are making a payment and do not have an Australian bank account/credit card, we can only accept payment as follows:

- via credit card with the applicable fee - the credit card company/bank will set the exchange rate
- via bank transfer; please give your surname and tour code (eg. Smith 21705) as a reference and ask your bank to allow for all charges.

Bank cheques or personal cheques will not be accepted.

By Cheque (accept Australian cheques only)

Please make cheques payable to *Australians Studying Abroad*

Direct Deposit or Internet Banking

You will need to:

1. Provide your bank with ASA's bank details (see below) and the amount you wish to transfer OR make a direct deposit through any ANZ branch
2. Include any fees levied by the banks
3. Provide a reference number (Mobile or last name recommended).
4. Complete section below, including confirmation no. (given when transaction completed).

Australians Studying Abroad bank details

Bank ANZ
Branch 420 St Kilda Road, Melbourne Vic
Swift Code ANZBAU3M
BSB 013-423
Account No 3472-32759

Bank confirmation No.

Reference used: Mobile or last name recommended

Date Money Transferred

Credit Card Payment

Credit card fees apply: Mastercard & Visa 2%
American Express 2%

Please debit my: Mastercard Visa American Express

I authorise ASA to debit my credit card for the amount due plus the applicable fee as above

Credit Card Number

Expiry Date

 Security Code (CVC)

Bank the Card is linked to (eg. NAB or ANZ)

Cardholders Name

Cardholders Billing Address

Postcode

State

 Country

Phone

Email

Cardholders Signature

AUSTRALIANS STUDYING ABROAD

Office 6, Level 1, 1087-1095 High St (PO Box 8285) Armadale VIC Australia 3143

Phone +61 3 9822 6899 Freecall 1800 645 755 (outside metro Melbourne area only) Email info@asatours.com.au License No. 31248 ABN 27 006 589 242

www.asatours.com.au