

Iran: Persian Palaces & Gardens



Duration • 15 Days & 13 Nights
Category • Standard

Expert-led group tour • From £4,495
Lecturers • Hilary Smith or Diana Driscoll

RA Royal Academy of Arts

Tour overview

A land of mystery and ancient cultures, Iran warmly welcomes visitors to explore its majestic Persian monuments, spectacular Islamic architecture and Zoroastrian Towers of Silence. As well as the must-see sights of Tehran, Yazd, Shiraz, Persepolis, Pasargadae and Isfahan, this tour also includes the little-visited city of Kerman, the exquisite Shazdeh garden in Mahan and the desert citadel of Rayen.

C&K highlights

- Ancient Persian palaces at Persepolis & Pasargadae
- Mysterious Zoroastrian sites in Yazd
- Spectacular Islamic architecture & gardens
- Travel off the beaten track to Kerman
- Two full days exploring Isfahan

Expert lecturers

Hilary Smith is a cultural historian and independent lecturer who for a number of years administered the Circle of Inner Asian Art at Soas. She first visited Iran in 1976, co-wrote the Bradt guide to the country and has accompanied many group tours there.



Diana Driscoll read ancient Middle East and Islamic studies at Soas. She is an independent researcher who gives regular talks at the British Museum. Her area of expertise is the Islamic world: religion, history, culture and languages.



Area Map



Persepolis

Day 1: Fly to Tehran

Board the overnight flight from London to Tehran with British Airways (regional connections available). (N)

Day 2: Tehran

Early morning arrival and transfer to the Espinas Hotel (or similar, including immediate occupancy) for 2 nights. After an introductory lecture and welcome lunch, visit some of Tehran's highlights, including the fabulous National Jewels Museum, housed in the vaults of the Central Bank of Iran, and the Reza Abbasi museum with its unique collection of Persian art. (B, L)

Day 3: Tehran

Full-day visit to some of Tehran's major museums including the National Museum, displaying a unique collection of pre-historic, ancient and Islamic artefacts; the Glass & Ceramics Museum, located in an elegant early 20th-century mansion; the Contemporary Art Museum and the extensive collection of the Carpet Museum. (B)

Day 4: Fly to Kerman

Morning flight to Kerman and spend the rest of the day visiting this desert trading city. Visits include the 14th-century Friday Mosque and the 17th-century Safavid-era Ganjali Khan complex, which contains a bathhouse, ethnographic museum, caravanserai and bazaar and the Harandi museum, which contains artefacts from the important Bronze Age site at Jiroft, discovered by chance as recently as 2000. Stay 2 nights at the Pars Hotel (or similar). (B)

Day 5: Rayen • Mahan

Full-day excursion to the village of Rayen to visit the citadel, a medieval mudbrick construction with all the architectural features of a desert citadel. On the return journey stop at Mahan to visit the blue-tiled Mausoleum of Shah Nematollah-e-Vali and Shazdeh garden. (B)

Day 6: Yazd

Drive to Yazd, en route visiting the Castle of Saryazd, one of the largest defensive castles in Iran's central desert. Afternoon at leisure. Stay at the Dad Hotel (or similar) for 2 nights. (B)

Day 7: Yazd

Full-day sightseeing in Yazd, the centre for Iran's Zoroastrian community. Visit an abandoned Zoroastrian Tower of Silence; the active Zoroastrian fire temple; the Friday Mosque, with the highest portal and minarets in Iran; and Dowlat-Abad, one of the many beautiful old houses in Yazd, with an 18th-century feudal hexagonal house, the highest wind tower in Iran and an authentic Iranian garden. (B)

Day 8: Abarkuh • Shiraz

Drive to Shiraz, en route visiting Abarkuh, a charming desert town, to see the historic Friday Mosque, constructed on the foundations of a Zoroastrian fire temple. Stay 3 nights at the Pars International Hotel (or similar). (B)

Day 9: Persepolis • Naghsh-e-Rostam

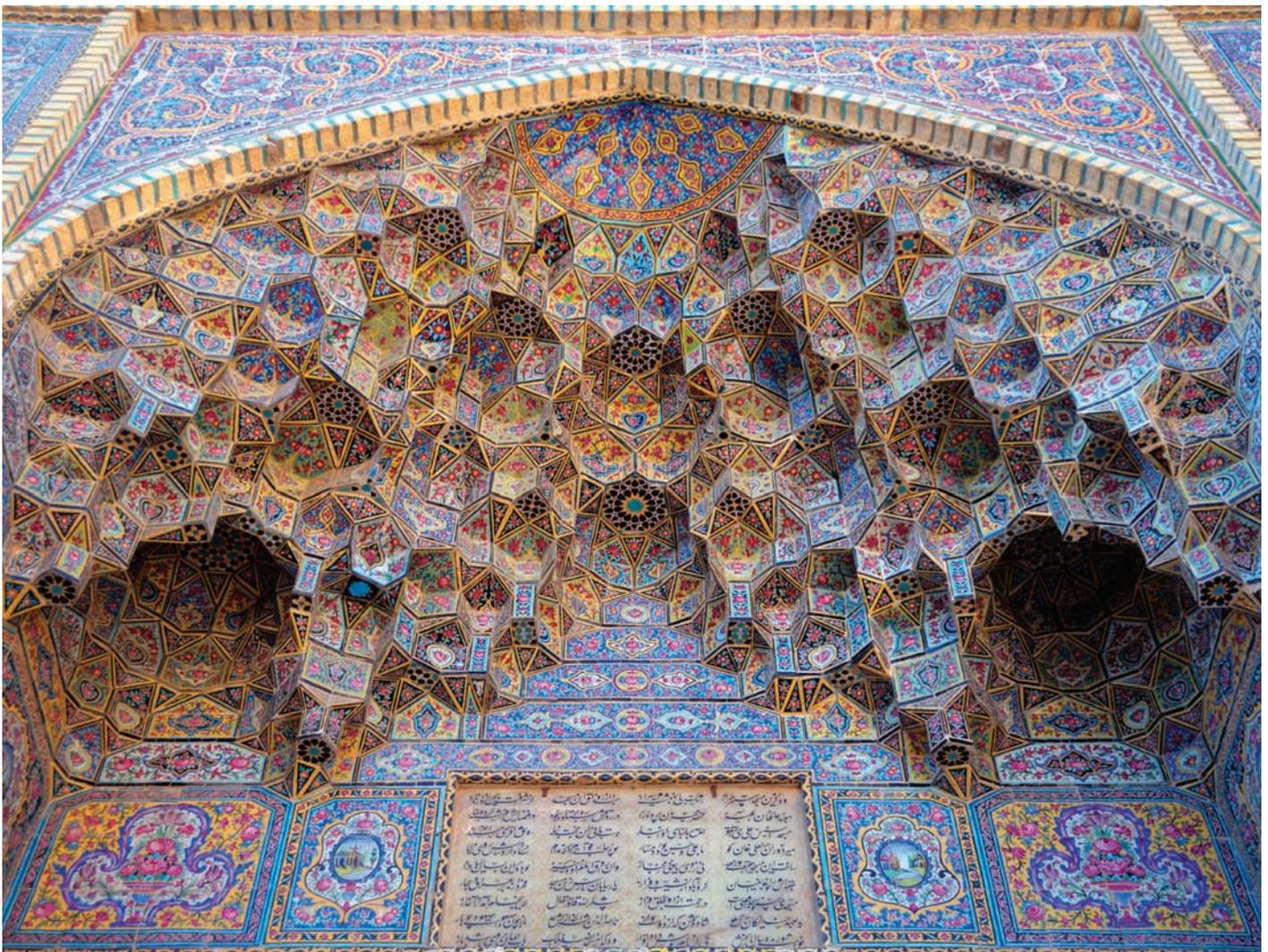
Visit Persepolis, one of the most important sites of the Ancient World and the ceremonial capital of the Achaemenian kings, with remains of the palaces of Darius the Great, Xerxes and Artaxerxes. Admire its bas-reliefs, depicting kings and courtiers. Continue to Naghsh-e-Rostam to see the Ka'be-Zardosht square tower and royal tombs, plus magnificent Sasanian rock-reliefs. (B)

Day 10: Shiraz

Full-day city tour of Shiraz to visit some of the celebrated gardens of this city of 'roses and nightingales', including Eram garden; the tombs of Iran's greatest lyric poets, Hafez and Sa'adi; the pink-tiled 19th-century Nasir-ol-Molk mosque; the exterior of the Arg-e-Karim Khan (18th-century citadel); and the shrine of Shah Cheragh. (B)

Day 11: Pasargadae • Isfahan

Drive to Isfahan, en route visiting Pasargadae, the site of the impressive tomb and remains of the palaces of Cyrus the Great, the founder of the Persian empire. Its palaces, the layout of the ancient gardens and the mausoleum of Cyrus are outstanding examples of the first phase of royal Achaemenian art and architecture and exceptional testimonies of Persian civilisation.



Shah Cheragh, Shiraz

Continue to Isfahan and stay 3 nights at the Abbasi Hotel (or similar). (B)

Day 12: Isfahan

Full-day tour of the beautiful city of Isfahan, the 17th-century capital of the Safavids, to visit the famous covered bridges and the Armenian quarter with several churches, including the important Armenian cathedral. In the afternoon visit one of the world's grandest squares, the Maidan-e-Naghsh-e-Jahan, to see Ali-Qapu Palace with its enchanting music rooms and balcony overlooking the Maidan, and two of the Islamic world's greatest mosques – the Sheikh Lotfollah and the Imam – with magnificent architecture and tile work. (B)

Day 13: Isfahan

Visit the magnificent Friday Mosque, considered a museum of a thousand years of Persian religious architecture. Drive to the Chehel Sotoun Palace, known as the Palace of Forty Columns, and also visit the Hasht Behesht, the Pavilion of Eight Paradises or the Palace of Nightingales. The small but intricate building is set among tree-lined alleys, a reflecting pool and water rills. Continue to Pigeon Tower, Imam Mosque and Qeisarieh bazaar with hundreds of shops displaying the arts and handicrafts for which Isfahan is world-famous. (B)

Day 14: Natanz • Kashan • Tehran

Return to Tehran, en route visiting Natanz and Kashan to see the Fin gardens and the former merchant's house of Taba-Tabai. Farewell dinner and overnight at Espinas Hotel (or similar). (B, D)

Day 15: Fly to London

Transfer to the airport and fly to London with British Airways. (B)

Meal basis: As per itinerary – B: Breakfast, L: Lunch, D: Dinner, N: No meals.

Important information

Royal Academy of Arts (RA) tours:

A collection of expert-accompanied tours focusing on creativity in its many forms. All RA tours are open to everyone and can be viewed at coxandkings.co.uk/ra.

Expert-led tour: This tour is fully escorted throughout by the lecturer, as well as an experienced local guide.

Standard tour: This tour is based in 4-star accommodation. Please visit this tour on our website to see details of the hotels included.

Accessibility: This tour involves some long drives and walking over rough terrain.

Dress code: Iran is an Islamic republic and visitors are required to conform to the Islamic dress code. For women, it is essential that all the body is covered, except the hands and face. Please contact Cox & Kings for more details.

Extensions: Pre- and post-tour extensions are available in Tehran and Isfahan, and include 2 nights' accommodation with arrival or departure transfers. Please speak to a Cox & Kings consultant for further details.

Dates & guideline prices for 2017-18

Tour code: IPG

03–17 Apr 2017	with Hillary Smith	from £4,495	single supp from £795
09–23 Oct 2017	with Diana Driscoll	from £4,495	single supp from £795
09–23 Apr 2018	with Hillary Smith	from £4,495	single supp from £795

 **Group tours include:** International flights • Transfers • Expert lecturer • The best local guides • All accommodation • All sightseeing described • All entrance fees • Meals as per itinerary

British Airways flight upgrades
Club World from £1,950 return

Regional air connections
Please speak to your consultant for details

The guideline tour prices are all per person in UK pounds, based on two people sharing a twin/double room. For current prices for all departure dates, including special offers when applicable, please call 020 3811 2980, email info@coxandkings.co.uk or visit coxandkings.co.uk.