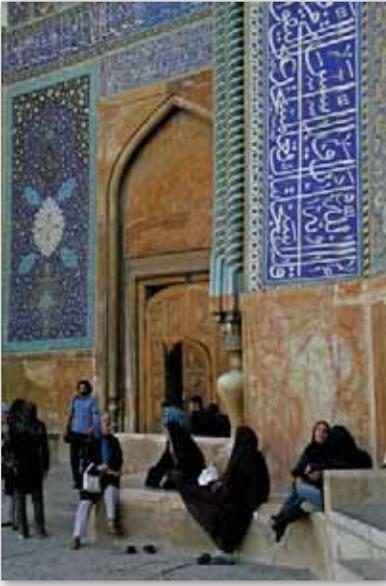




Essential Iran 2020



Essential Iran

Persian Odyssey To Shiraz, Isfahan And Tehran

Flexible Essential Trip – Classic Private Journey – 10 Days

Your choice of dates, suggested start day: Saturday

Visit a trio of Iran's finest cities to discover Persian treasures and modern Islamic daily life. See spirited Tehran, the country's marketplace, romantic Shiraz with its miles of roses, and beautiful Isfahan, its arched bridges glowing in the evening light.

Iran, once the seat of the Persian Empire and now a modern-day Islamic Republic, is part of our shared heritage. Muslims, Christians and Jews, all "People of the Book," have been historically connected since Adam and Eve, and nowhere is that connection more obvious than in Iran. This overland journey features the well-known cities of Tehran, Shiraz and Isfahan, giving you a chance not only to learn about the history of this ancient land, but also to meet its modern inhabitants and gain understanding of their culture.



Daily Itinerary

Day 1, Saturday	Arrive Tehran
Day 2, Sunday	Tehran
Day 3, Monday	Tehran • fly to Shiraz
Day 4, Tuesday	Shiraz
Day 5, Wednesday	Shiraz • Isfahan via Persepolis
Day 6, Thursday	Isfahan
Day 7, Friday	Isfahan
Day 8, Saturday	Isfahan
Day 9, Sunday	Isfahan • drive to Tehran
Day 10, Monday	Depart Tehran



Tour Highlights

Tehran	National Islamic Museum, local bazaars, Museum of Glassware and Ceramics of Iran (Abgineh), Golestan Palace (UNESCO World Heritage Site) (schedules permitting)
Shiraz	“City of Roses and Nightingales,” Tomb of Hafez, Narenjestan Ghavam Museum, Nasir-ol-Molk Mosque
Persepolis	Ceremonial capital of the Achaeminid kings (UNESCO World Heritage Site), Naghsh-e Rostam, burial sites of Darius the Great, Xerxes and Artaxerxes, Kabe-Zardosht fire temple and sanctuary, Sassanian rock-reliefs
Isfahan	Imam Square (UNESCO World Heritage Site) Ali-Qapu Palace, Sheikh Lotfollah and Imam mosques, bridges of Shahrestan, Khaju and Si-o-se Pol, Friday Mosque (UNESCO World Heritage Site), Ali Minaret, Jewish Quarter, Armenian Quarter, Vank Cathedral

Daily Itinerary

Day One, Saturday

Arrive Tehran

Upon arrival in Tehran this afternoon or evening, you are welcomed and transferred to the hotel by a driver and an English-speaking guide. Today has been left completely free for arrivals, with no scheduled touring.

Meals: Independent – *Grand Hotel II, Ferdowsi Hotel or similar*

Day Two, Sunday

Tehran

Today, begin exploring Tehran. After the Mongols destroyed the Silk Road city of Rey, Tehran rose in its place as the region’s most important trading center. By 1789 Tehran became the capital of Persia under the Qajar ruler, Agha Mohammad Khan.

While the city grew in prominence, it remained basically unchanged until the massive modernization efforts of the 1920s. Since then, Tehran has grown in population from less than 300,000 to a metropolis of more than eight million.

Modern Tehran is full of shops, museums, mosques, minarets, restaurants, teahouses and a sprawling bazaar. The touring today begins with the archaeological section of the **National Islamic Museum of Iran**.

Next, admire some of Tehran’s finest applied arts at the **Museum of Glassware and Ceramics of Iran (Abgineh)**. The museum displays items made from both

glass and clay that date back as early as the 4th millennium BC. Along with archaeological artifacts, the



museum displays etched glass from the 18th and 19th centuries, and decorative objects from the modern period.

Schedules permitting, explore the **Golestan Palace** complex, the oldest of Tehran's historic monuments, begun in the 16th century as a fortress by the Safavid dynasty. Encompassing several palatial buildings around a cool green garden, the complex includes the Marble Throne, created from 65 pieces of yellow Yazd marble. In 2013, Golestan Palace was inscribed onto the **UNESCO World Heritage List**.

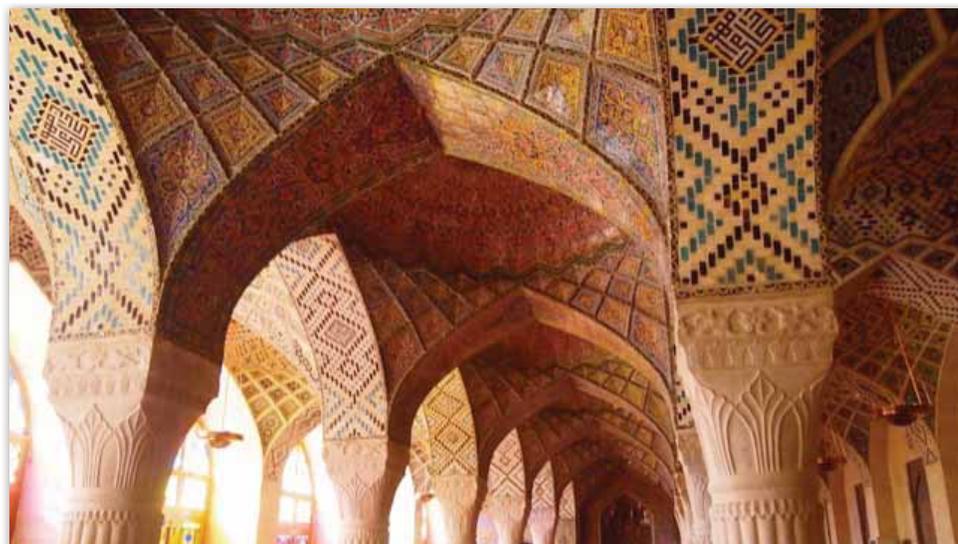
Meals: B, L, D – *Grand Hotel II, Ferdowsi Hotel or similar*

Day Three, Monday

Tehran • fly to Shiraz

Depending on flight schedules, Day Two's touring may be finished today, before flying to the next city on the itinerary. Due to frequent schedule changes on domestic Iranian flights, please **plan to be somewhat flexible** for this day. There may be downtime for souvenir shopping in Tehran before departure, or free time in Shiraz, depending on the arrival time.

Transfer to the airport for a flight to **Shiraz**, and check in to the hotel upon arrival. The fabled city of Shiraz has a long and remarkable history stretching over 2,500 years. It is the capital of the Fars Province where the Persian language of Farsi originated. One of the most important cities of the Islamic medieval period, Shiraz has reigned as the capital of several Islamic dynasties. A major artistic, religious and academic center, the city is famed for its poetry, gardens, learning centers and architecture. Beautiful, romantic and hospitable, Shiraz is the favorite of many travelers, and remains one of the most enjoyable places to visit in all of Iran.



Dinner tonight will be independent.

Meals: B, L – *Aryo-Barzan Hotel, Park Sa'adi Hotel, or similar*

Day Four, Tuesday

Shiraz

Set off after breakfast this morning for a full day tour of this **“City of Roses and Nightingales.”**

Start by visiting the **tomb of Iran's greatest lyric poet, Hafez**. Surrounded by a lovely garden, the tomb of Iran's favorite poet is a

place of pilgrimage and reverence. Hafez was born and died in Shiraz in the 14th century, and his poetry is memorized by many Iranians. The marble tombstone is engraved with some of his verses. The teahouse by a cooling pool is a wonderful place to sit and people-watch.

Next is the **Narenjestan Ghavam Museum**, once the grand house of the Qavam family who were wealthy governors in the Shiraz region. The house itself is a fine example of 19th century Persian architecture and the gardens have been kept meticulously. Frescoes, tilework and carvings in the building



depict lions (the family crest) and human figures along with flower motifs. In 1966, the house was donated to Shiraz University and was used as an Asian art museum until 1979. Now, it is a museum in and of itself.

Continue to the **Nasir-ol-Molk Mosque**. The stunning Nasir-ol-Molk Mosque, constructed from 1876 to 1888, is an explosion of colors with some of the finest examples of Persian Islamic tilework, stained glasswork and architecture in Shiraz. Used as the Friday Mosque of Shiraz, it is popularly called the Pink Mosque because of the characteristic pastel color of its interior tiles.

Admire the exterior of the **Shah Cheraq Shrine**. Note the original 12th century portico with its ten columns on the mausoleum of Ahmad and Muhammad, brothers of Imam Reza. This place of pilgrimage is called Shah Cheraq, or "King of Light." Finally visit the exciting **Vakil Bazaar**, an 11th century covered bazaar lined with little shops, courtyards and bath houses. This is arguably the finest bazaar in Iran and a great place to bargain for carpets, handicrafts, jewelry and antiques. Merchandise is brought in by hand or on small carts through the narrow lanes between the stalls.

Lunch will be at a local restaurant during touring today, while an independent dinner gives you the chance to explore this long-lived town on your own.

Overnight at the hotel.

Meals: B, L – *Aryo-Barzan Hotel, Park Sa'adi Hotel or similar*



Day Five, Wednesday

Shiraz • Isfahan via Persepolis

After breakfast, depart for one of the most important sites of the Ancient World and the ceremonial capital of the Achaemenid kings, **Persepolis, a UNESCO World Heritage Site**. Spend the day exploring this venerable city, some of the most fascinating ruins in the world. View the **famous bas-reliefs** showing kings, courtiers and gift-bearing representatives of the Persian Empire's tributary nations.

The tour continues to the **tombs of Naghsh-e-Rostam**, thought to be the **burial sites of Darius the Great, Xerxes and Artaxerxes**.

See the **Kabe-Zardosht** fire temple and sanctuary, and seven magnificent **Sassanian rock-reliefs**, including Shapur the First's famous victory over Roman Emperor Valerian.

This afternoon continue on to Isfahan, checking in to the hotel upon arrival. Dinner tonight is independent.

Meals: B, L – *Ali-Qapu Persian Hotel or similar*



Day Six, Thursday
Isfahan

Set off for a full day introductory tour of **Isfahan**. Under the rule of Shah Abbas the Great of the 16th-century Safavid dynasty, Isfahan became a celebrated and beautiful city, referred to as Nesf-e-Jahan, meaning “half of the world.” Even after centuries of turmoil and destruction at the hands of foreign invaders, Isfahan’s grace is palpable.

See the famous **bridges of Shahrestan, Khaju and Si-o-se Pol**, great places to bask in the atmosphere of Isfahan.

Visit the **Armenian Quarter**, location of several churches including **Vank Cathedral**. The sand colored stonework of the cathedral conceals a beautifully ornate interior, with delicate tilework and gilt embellishments. Vank is an important historical reminder of the Armenian migration to Isfahan and is located in the Armenian neighborhood of New Julfa. During the 17th century, Armenians began settling at the southern bank of the Zayandeh River and the cathedral dates from some of the earliest settlement in 1606. Used now as a museum, a memorial to the Armenian genocide, and as the home of a historic printing press, Vank is still at the heart of the community of Armenian-Iranians and houses over 20,000 volumes of literary and religious works in Armenian.



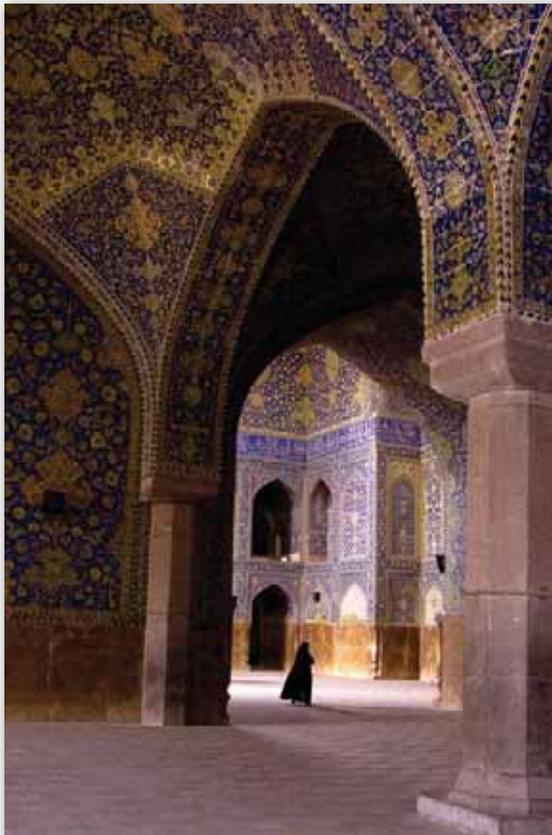
After lunch, continue with a visit to one of the world’s largest public squares, **Maidan-e Naghsh-e Jahan**, also known as **Imam Square**. In the center of Isfahan, it is one of the largest urban squares in the world. Shah Abbas the Great built the graceful ensemble in the early 17th century after he moved the capital here. A **UNESCO World Heritage Site**, the square was the symbolic center of the Safavid Empire.



Here, find the **Ali-Qapu Palace**, where Safavid Kings watched polo games from the balcony. Also of note are the magnificent Sheikh Lotfollah and Imam Mosques. These two masterpieces are among the finest mosques in the country. The **Imam Mosque** has brilliant mosaics and tall minarets. The **Lotfollah Mosque** lacks minarets but offers superb examples of tilework in its domed interior.

Return to the hotel for overnight. Dinner tonight is independent.
Meals: B, L – *Ali-Qapu Persian Hotel or similar*

Day Seven, Friday Isfahan



Continue exploring Isfahan today, with a visit to the spectacular Friday Mosque, one of the world's greatest mosques and an excellent example of Persian architecture. Isfahan's **Masjid-e-Jameh, or Friday Mosque**, looks more austere from the outside than the mosques in Imam Square. Its interior, however, encompasses over 800 years of Islamic architectural styles. With over 200 vaults, some of them decorated with the then-innovative *muqarnas* (small pointed niches or stalactite formations), the complex makes up the largest and most eclectic mosque in Iran. The Friday Mosque was designated a **UNESCO World Heritage Site** in 2012.

Take a walk in the former **Jewish Quarter**, called the Juibareh, one of the oldest neighborhoods in Isfahan. Jews no longer live here, although about a thousand still live in Isfahan. Jews trace their relationship with Persia to the 6th century BC, when they were exiled to Babylon and scattered throughout the area. It was Persian Emperor Cyrus the Great who allowed them to return to the Land of Israel. Through the centuries, the Jews in Persia were alternately tolerated and persecuted. In the 16th century, Shah Abbas I encouraged Jews to settle in Isfahan, although by the time Lord Curzon visited in the 19th century, many restrictions were in force. Before the Islamic Revolution in 1979, there were perhaps 3,000 Jews in Isfahan, many of whom fled to Israel or the U.S. Today, several synagogues hold Sabbath services in other parts of the city, including an unmarked synagogue on Palestine Square near the Abbasi

Hotel.

Returning to the city center, visit **Chehel Sotun Palace**. Shah Abbas II built the Chehel Sotun Palace in 1647. Set in a park by a long pool between the Ali Qapu Palace and Chahar Bagh Avenue, the pavilion was used for receptions and entertainment. The name means "40 Columns," and refers to the 20 wooden columns supporting the entrance to the Great Hall, multiplied by their reflection in the pool. Inside are wonderful frescoes, miniatures and ceramics.

Enjoy a free evening to explore Imam Square. Dinner tonight is independent.
Meals: B, L – *Ali-Qapu Persian Hotel or similar*



Day Eight, Saturday

Isfahan

Enjoy an additional day today to explore more of this spectacular city. You can discuss options with your guide the day prior, which can include more time in the markets and the workshops of local artisans, additional time for photography, or simply strolling and relaxing in the parks and squares. The services of your guide and driver will be available to you today. Dinner is independent.

Meals: B, L – *Ali Qapu Hotel or similar*

Day Nine, Sunday

Isfahan • drive to Tehran

Today return to Tehran overland. This is a 450-km drive and, with minor en route stops, is expected to take all day. Stops will likely include Natanz, Kashan, or Qom, though the specifics will be finalized near your departure date.

Along the road between Isfahan and Tehran is the town of **Natanz**. Best known for its delicious pears and its 14th-century shrine to Sufi mystic Sheikh Abd al-Samad, Natanz is a pleasant town of about 12,000.

Located on the edge of the Dasht-e Kavir salt desert, **Kashan** gets its water from a system of *qanats* and from a nearby spring. These provide water for one of Iran's most treasured gardens, Bagh-e Fin, with its centuries-old cypress trees.

Make a stop in the **sacred city of Qom** to admire the facade of the **Shrine of Fatima al-Masumeh**, sister of the eighth Imam. Non-Muslims are not allowed to enter the shrine, but can take photos and maybe try some of Qom's signature cookies, called *sohan*.

On arrival in Tehran, overnight at a hotel near the international airport in time for an independent dinner and to reflect on the trip to this ancient land.

Meals: B, L – *Ibis Hotel or similar*

Day Ten, Monday

Depart Tehran

Having overnights at one of the hotels near Tehran's international airport, you will be able to walk across to the terminal with your guide this morning.

Meals: B



Flexible Essential Trip – Classic Private Journey

Private departures of this land itinerary can begin on the Saturday of your choice in 2020. Please note you will need to depart the U.S. one or two days prior to your tour start date due to airline flight schedules.

Flexible Essential trip prices may vary by season and by start day, and are subject to hotel availability for your travel dates. Hotel room category upgrades, and additional nights are available on request. Contact us at 1-800-424-7289 for more information.

Private Journey Prices

Three to four-star hotels as shown, transportation as listed in itinerary

2 traveler minimum, from \$4,995 per person, twin share

Plus internal air, \$125 per person (economy class, subject to change)

Single supplement from \$725

Solo traveler rate, inclusive of single supplement: \$7,995 plus internal air \$125 (economy class, subject to change)

Hotel Upgrade Prices

Upgrading properties used throughout to four to five-star hotels – *Laleh Hotel or similar in Tehran, Homa Hotel or similar in Shiraz, Abbasi Hotel or similar in Isfahan, and Novotel Hotel or similar near the Tehran airport the final night:*

2 traveler minimum, from \$5,795 per person, twin share

Plus internal air, \$125 per person (economy class, subject to change)

Single supplement from \$995

Solo traveler rate, inclusive of single supplement: \$9,395 plus internal air \$125 (economy class, subject to change)

It is possible to fly from Isfahan to Tehran on Day Nine of the program. Regardless of the hotel level used for the program, for groups of 2 or more travelers, this **adds \$200 per person** to the land package price **and \$90 per person to the internal air costs**. For solo travelers, the upgrade **adds \$200** to the land package price **and \$90 to the internal air costs**. Please call with any questions.

Your Private Journey Includes

- Accommodations as noted in the itinerary. See *Hotel Upgrade* section above for upgrade information.
- 9 breakfasts, 8 lunches and 1 dinner, per the itinerary. Most dinners are left free to allow independent exploration.
- One arrival and one departure airport transfer. (Additional arrival and departure transfers available at additional cost.) MIR will arrange for travelers to be met upon arrival and seen off on departure, whether we make your air arrangements or not.
- Ground transportation throughout itinerary by car or van (size of vehicle depends on number of travelers in your party).
- Guided sightseeing tours and entrance fees as outlined in itinerary.
- Services of a National Guide with local guides at specific sites.
- Complete pre-departure information including detailed packing list, reading list, *Touring with MIR* handbook with country-specific information, maps, and travel tips.
- Assistance booking your custom flight arrangements (on request; please note that international airfare is not included in the land tour cost).
- Customized visa application and instruction kit (please note, visa fees are not included in the tour price).
- Final document packet including a travel journal, luggage tags, final updates, and more.

Not Included

- Internal airfare (internal airfare is quoted separately and is subject to change by airlines).
- International airfare or taxes/fuel surcharges.
- Meals not specified as included in the itinerary.
- Items of a personal nature (phone calls, email, laundry, excess baggage, etc).
- Baggage handling.
- Gratuities to National Guide, local guides and drivers.
- Single supplement charge, if requested or required.
- Visa/passport fees, airport departure fees.
- Expenses incurred as a result of delay, modification or extension of a tour due to causes beyond MIR's control.
- Travel and trip cancellation insurance.

Interested in travel insurance?

To learn more about all the benefits of purchasing a Travel Guard travel insurance plan, please visit www.travelguard.com/mircorp or contact Travel Guard at 1-877-709-5596.

Flexible Essential Trips – Classic Private Journeys

Flexible Essential Private Trips are compact, well-designed private tour itineraries – researched and ready to book on the dates you choose. They work perfectly as brief overviews of a country or as effortless extensions to group tours – great for solo travelers, couples, or private parties who prefer to travel independently but appreciate a savvy pre-designed program.



Start Planning Next Year Now

2021 Flexible Essential Trip – Classic Private Journey – 10 Days

At the time of writing, the land itinerary for this program next year is projected to be generally as depicted for this year. Please call if you're ready to book now.

Private departures of this land itinerary can begin on the Saturday of your choice in 2021. Please note you will need to depart the U.S. at least one day prior to your tour start date due to airline flight schedules.

Private Journey Prices – 2021

Three to four-star hotels as shown, transportation as listed in itinerary

2 traveler minimum, from \$5,095 per person, twin share

Plus internal air, \$145 per person (economy class, subject to change)

Single supplement from \$750

Solo traveler rate, inclusive of single supplement: \$8,095 plus internal air \$145 (economy class, subject to change)

Hotel Upgrade Prices

Upgrading properties used throughout to four to five-star hotels – *Laleh Hotel or similar in Tehran, Homa Hotel or similar in Shiraz, Abbasi Hotel or similar in Isfahan, and Novotel Hotel or similar near the Tehran airport the final night:*

2 traveler minimum, from \$5,895 per person, twin share

Plus internal air, \$145 per person (economy class, subject to change)

Single supplement from \$1,095

Solo traveler rate, inclusive of single supplement: \$9,495 plus internal air \$145 (economy class, subject to change)

It is possible to fly from Isfahan to Tehran on Day Nine of the program. Regardless of the hotel level used for the program, for groups of 2 or more travelers, this **adds \$200 per person** to the land package price **and \$90 per person to the internal air costs**. For solo travelers, the upgrade **adds \$200** to the land package price **and \$90 to the internal air costs**. Please call with any questions.

Important Notes: Is This Trip Right For You?

The accommodations vary from superior tourist class to more basic hotels. It is important to keep in mind that the country of Iran may not be up to the standards North American travelers expect. Services are improving; however, you may encounter problems with bureaucratic service, road conditions, plumbing, unpaved sidewalks, uneven surfaces and steps, variety of locally available foods, and availability and quality of public restrooms. You are traveling in some areas that see few travelers, and the infrastructure is not yet fully developed.

While this program is designed to be the most comfortable possible for travel in this region, it is rated as **rigorous touring** due to the daily walking involved, the length of some overland rides and the overall



shortcomings of the tourism infrastructure. This itinerary features a significant amount of touring on foot. Many streets are of packed dirt, and some attractions are only accessible via steep staircases with tall uneven steps. Some of the cities visited (Shiraz, for example) are over 5,000 feet in elevation, about the same as Denver. Often the museums have no elevators. In particular, at the archaeological site of Persepolis, an entire half-day is spent exploring on foot, without access to shade or seating. At Isfahan's Ali-Qapu Palace, there are approximately 80 steps to negotiate before coming to the rooftop viewing area. During touring excursions, availability of western toilets is unreliable in Iran. Many public toilets encountered during touring, at museums, at restaurants and so forth are squat toilets, and handrails may be inadequate.

Every effort has been made to make the information in this schedule accurate. However, trip itineraries are always subject to change. We do our best to inform you in advance of any changes, but due to the nature of travel in Iran, this may not always be possible. Only those willing to accept these conditions should consider joining this program.

Technically, **insurance is required for travel in Iran** and you are recommended to have proof of insurance available to show border patrol/customs agents if they inquire. Please be prepared for the possibility you could be asked to purchase insurance on the spot depending on the border patrol authorities handling your entry. This is a more common occurrence at land border crossings, and proof of insurance inquiries are exceedingly rare at airport entry into Iran.

To reap the full rewards of this adventure, travelers must be able to walk at least a mile a day. Flexibility, a sense of humor and a willingness to accept local standards of amenities and services are essential components to the enjoyment of this trip. Another challenge for **female travelers** is the need to **wear Islamic dress** at all times when in public, even in the touring vehicle or at breakfast in the hotel. Women are expected to respect the local dress code of covered hair and no exposed skin except for the face and hands. This can consist of a head-scarf and a loose long-sleeved overgarment, like a coat or tunic. Please call for more specific details.

It is a **requirement that U.S. visitors to Iran be accompanied by a National Guide** for all touring, even if arriving early.

Please read the U.S. State Department's Travel Advisory regarding travel to Iran at:
<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories/iran-travel-advisory.html>

This travel notice for Iran has been in place for 30+ years, yet the recent overhaul of the State Department travel advisory system puts this notice in a sharper focus. There are many factors that go into its level 4 ranking, but an important contributing factor is that the United States does not have an embassy in Iran. Therefore, we do not have government officials in country assessing and reporting the political, economic, and cultural climate on a daily basis. Safety and security of our travelers is our number one priority to that end we will continue to monitor events through a variety of sources including State Department guidance as well as via our network of contacts in Iran.

There are many holidays in Iran. During holidays you may eat more lunches at your hotel as restaurants within city limits may not serve lunch. Some minor schedule changes may occur as a result of religious holidays.

Are You Prepared?

A Travel Guard travel insurance plan can help cover your vacation investment, offset expenses from travel mishaps and provide you with emergency travel assistance. To learn more about all of the benefits of



purchasing a Travel Guard travel insurance plan, please visit www.travelguard.com/mircorp

Learn more about the destinations you are bound for by reading the country information pages at: <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel/International-Travel-Country-Information-Pages.html>

If you are not already enrolled in STEP, Smart Traveler Enrollment Program, a free service to enroll your trip with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate, please consider enrolling. For more information: <https://step.state.gov/step/>

Please read the U.S. State Department's Travel Advisory regarding travel to Iran at: <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories/iran-travel-advisory.html>

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Weather

Iran enjoys a highly variable climate, ranging from very hot at the height of summer to quite cold during the relatively short winter months. By mid-March, the cold season has generally passed, and the weather can be expected to range from the low 50s to the mid 60s. As summer progresses, daytime temperatures can reach into the mid 90s or low 100s, with July and August generally being the hottest, sunniest, driest months; at night it doesn't cool off much and can still be in the 70s. Rain is minimal. Temperatures in April and May range from 60-80 degrees Fahrenheit, while September temperatures are typically 80-95 degrees Fahrenheit during the day. October and November are a particularly comfortable time to visit, with temperatures ranging from 50-70+ degrees Fahrenheit during the day and in the 40s at night.

Please remember, weather at all times of year has an element of the unpredictable. This information comes from weatherbase.com and is based on data from previous temperatures on record. It is always advisable to check with weatherbase.com closer to your departure date for current conditions and forecasts for the specific region of Iran you will be visiting.

International Airfare

MIR's in-house, full-service air department is available to assist with your air travel needs. Check with MIR before booking air on your own, as we are happy to research and compare the best fares available through multiple channels. Airfare varies depending on a wide variety of factors, such as dates of travel and seasonality, seat availability, special airline promotions, how restrictive ticket changes are, how long the fares can be held without purchase, routing considerations such as stopovers, and more. Tour dates are based on the land tour only. Our preferred carriers for this tour are Lufthansa and Turkish Airlines, as they offer convenient itineraries and competitive rates from multiple cities across the U.S. to Iran.

Please call us at 800-424-7289 to discuss air options and routings for this program, and to request a quote for your specific plans and dates of travel. We will be happy to put together a no-obligation suggested air itinerary and estimate for you at your request.



Visas

At the time of writing, U.S. passport holders require one visa for this tour: Iranian single-entry. You may also need a visa for any additional country you fly via to join the tour (such as Turkey).

An estimate of current visa costs for U.S. passport holders, based on standard processing time, is \$209. Your exact visa fees may differ as visa costs can depend on a number of factors, such as state of residence, processing time, and return shipping. Visa fees are always subject to change.

Extensive pre-tour paperwork is necessary to apply for this visa, which requires a foreign government approval authorization to be issued prior to submission of your application materials to the Iranian visa section. A valid passport with six months validity from the end of the tour is also required.

Visa processing for this tour may take several months all together. However, for Iranian processing, much of the time required is in processing the “behind the scenes” authorization. In general, the time that the passport is required to be out of travelers’ hands is limited to several weeks. Travelers should prepare to be without their passports for that amount of time. Please contact us with any questions you may have regarding the timeline for visa processing.

In the past some travelers have made their own visa arrangements instead of using MIR’s preferred provider for their visa processing; either using their own visas service or attempting to process directly with the embassies/consulates. We strongly recommend you discuss it with us before choosing an alternate visa processing method, to help avoid difficulties and visa problems. **In the event that you plan to process visas without going through MIR’s preferred provider, please contact us first so we can pass you detailed instructions with critical trip-specific information.**

Pre- and Post-Tours

Many travelers choose to extend their **Essential Iran** program by adding one or more pre-tour nights in Tehran. This allows them to rest and relax after the long journey halfway around the world. There are several key factors to keep in mind when planning additional nights. Please note that Day 1 of this program is left completely free as an arrival day. Hotel rooms are available from about 2:00 p.m. on Day 1 onward and this night is included in the price of your tour package. Most clients will arrive in Tehran either late in the evening Day 1 or very early in the morning (2:00-4:00 a.m.) on Day 2, and will be transferred to the hotel and checked into their waiting rooms. Touring will then begin after breakfast Day 2.

Some clients will choose instead to travel to Tehran on a similar schedule, but will leave home a day earlier. Those that do will arrive in the early morning hours (2:00 a.m.) of Day 1 and need to know that the hotel is not guaranteed to be available at that time. The only way to guarantee access to the hotel for early a.m. arrivals in general is to pre-book and pre-pay the previous night. MIR can make that booking for you; please contact us for rates.

It is a requirement that U.S. visitors to Iran be accompanied by a National Guide for all touring, even if arriving early.

This program is designed to start any day of the week, and can run in any 10-day time period, making it the perfect tour to link to other 2020 small group tour programs. Perhaps you would like to experience the South Caucasus countries, Central Asia, Western Russia or Eastern Europe; all of MIR’s destinations



are open to you, and all can be attached to this program. Please contact MIR for more details about exciting options for extended travel.

Also Nearby...

For more tours to Central Asia and Iran, you may want to check out:

Flexible Essential Trips – Classic Private Journeys

Essential Iran Enhanced, 12 days. Spend twelve days sampling Iran's cities, walking through history, discovering Zoroastrian life, studying archaeological sites and admiring gorgeous Islamic architecture. From cosmopolitan Tehran to breathtaking Isfahan, get to know five illustrious Iranian cities and seven outstanding UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

Essential Tajikistan, 8 days. Rarely visited Tajikistan is wreathed in spectacular mountains and colored with the influence of Persia, the Islamic world and Russia. Meet local people at Fergana Valley markets, explore the ruins of ancient Penjikent and share a meal in a warm Tajik home. Visit the country's capital, Dushanbe, where an airy, light-filled space is home to the modern National Museum of Tajikistan.

Essential Kazakhstan, 7 days. Begin in the new city of Astana, capital of Kazakhstan only since 1997. Fly to Chimkent and discover the historic city of Turkistan with its UNESCO-listed mausoleum of a revered Sufi sheikh. Fly to Almaty and explore spectacular Charyn Canyon, with its strange rock formations and colorful strata.

Essential Central Asia, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, 13 days. Explore the markets, mosques, minarets and teahouses of oasis towns on the fringes of the Kyzyl Kum and Kara Kum deserts. Here on the bridge between East and West, spiritual beliefs were the greatest commodities to flow along trade routes, and civilizations blossomed amidst austere natural beauty.

Essential Uzbekistan, 10 days. Roam the great Silk Road oases of Bukhara, Samarkand and Khiva, along with modern Tashkent, the Uzbek capital. Admire their mosques, *madrassahs* and minarets built of mud bricks and clad in ceramic tiles the color of the desert sky.

Small Group Tours

Ancient Persia – Modern Iran, 19 days. Persia, the exotic land that is home to one of the world's oldest civilizations, has been known in the west as Iran since 1935, and is a modern country of more than 80 million people. Explore Iran's fabulous bazaars, admire its splendid architecture and complex ornamentation, discover its formidable archaeological sites and converse with the people who call it home.

Silk Route Odyssey: Caravan Across Uzbekistan, 15 days. The center of Central Asia, Uzbekistan is home to three of the most renowned of the Silk Road oases – Samarkand, Bukhara and Khiva. Journey through these UNESCO Sites and the lush Fergana Valley, where Central Asia's silk production began with two cocoons hidden in the headdress of a royal Chinese bride.

The Pamir Highway: From the Tien Shan to the High Pamirs, 18 days. The Pamir Mountains of Tajikistan are some of the most rugged and beautiful on Earth, soaring upward where the Himalayas, the Tien Shan and the Hindu Kush meet. This adventurous journey over the Pamir Highway is a breathtaking route, in use since the time of the Silk Road.



Once Forbidden Lands of Central Asia & Iran, 20 days. The countries of Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Iran are woven together like the burnished threads of a fine Persian carpet. From earliest recorded history, these lands have exchanged rulers, architecture, art and religion. Explore the dazzling bazaars and extravagant desert architecture along the byways of the old Silk Road between Tashkent and Tehran.

Conditions of Participation

Your participation on a MIR Corporation trip is subject to the conditions contained in the 2020 Tour Reservation Form and Release of Liability and Assumption of Risk Agreement. Please read this document carefully and contact us with any questions.

Cancellation and Refund Policy

Payment Terms: Non-refundable deposits are accepted by check, Visa, MasterCard or American Express. Final land payments may be made by check or credit card for reservations made directly with MIR. If booking through a travel agent, please contact your agent to find out what form of payment they accept. (MIR can accept final payment from travel agents by agency check only.) Airfares are subject to change until ticketed; payment policies vary by carrier.

If you cancel your trip please notify MIR in writing. Upon MIR's receipt of notice the following charges apply to land tours (policies for air tickets, custom group trips vary).

Flexible Essential Trips

Cost of cancellation, if received:

61 or more days prior to departure, deposit due or paid in full of \$750;

31-60 days prior to departure, 50% of land tour cost;

30 days prior to or after trip departure, no refund.

References

We encourage you to speak directly with satisfied past travelers. Please request a list of references.

Why MIR?

Regional knowledge is crucial to the success of any trip to our corner of the world. MIR combines detailed information about geography and infrastructure, history and art, language and culture, with the depth of knowledge that comes only from decades of regional experience. You may wonder how we differ from other tour operators...

Destination Specialization

MIR focuses exclusively on the exceptional region at the crossroads of Europe and Asia. This area has been our overriding passion since 1986; we don't do the rest of the world. Our hard-earned expertise gained over the last three decades can take you from end to end of the largest country in the world – Russia – and to all of its neighbors. We specialize in travel to Siberia, the Silk Route, St. Petersburg & Beyond. Our destinations include: Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, the Baltics (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania), the Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Slovenia), Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan), Iran, the South Caucasus (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia), Turkey, Mongolia, China, Tibet, and Central/East Europe (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia).



30 Years of Experience

A travel company doesn't last more than 30 years in the business without a solid track record. MIR has helped thousands of individuals achieve their travel goals. Our dedication and experience have earned us their trust and the trust of many well-respected institutions. Today MIR is the preferred tour operator for museum, alumni and special interest organizations across the country.



Recommended & Respected

MIR has twice been rated one of the “Best Adventure Travel Companies on Earth” by *National Geographic Adventure*. Several of our tours have won awards in top travel publications, such as *Outside* magazine and *National Geographic Traveler*. Our trips have been featured in books such as *Riding the Hula Hula to the Arctic Ocean* and *1,000 Places to See Before You Die*.

More Questions?

Please feel free to call us with questions at 1-800-424-7289, 8:30am-5:30pm Pacific Time.

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