



Iranian Holiday Package: Wonders of Man and Nature

Birdwatching and Cultural Heritage in Ancient Persia

A 14-day tour in search of birds, mammals, and wildflowers, with visits to many ancient monuments, expertly guided by our British naturalist. From the temperate forests bordering the Caspian Sea to the sub-tropical region of Oman and the Persian Gulf, Iran is a vast country, full of natural beauty, and rich in history. Its wild, open landscapes encompass vast mountain ranges, lush forests, arid deserts, fertile plains and marshy lowlands. This tremendous variety of geography and climate has created an incredibly rich biodiversity, such that within the borders of one country you might see the Caucasian Black Cock and the African Sacred Ibis, or set sail in search of wild salmon in the north, crocodiles in the south, and blue whales Golden Eagle in the Persian Gulf. This paradise for nature lovers is one of a dwindling number of places in the world where the richness of the natural environment has yet to be fully documented.

Iran offers countless opportunities for observing wildlife, with nearly 500 species of birds, 160 mammals, and an inordinate number of native plants and invertebrates. With many regions of Iran still relatively uncharted territory for the botanist, recent estimates that the country is home to over 1000 plant species may yet prove to be conservative.

National parks and protected areas offer a refuge for wildlife, where you can observe unusual birds, mammals, reptiles, colourful insects and butterflies, all in their natural habitats. Of course, we cannot guarantee you will see a particular species, but an ornithologists' logbook might well include sightings of any (or indeed all) of the following: Ground Jay, Reget, Heron, Siberian White Crane, Golden Eagle (abundant), Imperial Eagle, Lammergeier, Egyptian Vulture, Black Vulture, Honey Buzzard, Long-legged Buzzard, Common Buzzard, Great Tit, Wheateater, Squacco Heron, Hoopoe, Blue-cheeked Bee Eater, Whiskered Tern, Greater Flamingo (in winter), Large Rock Nuthatch, Pied Kingfisher, Cattle Egret, Common Crane, Purple Heron, Purple Gallinule, Dalmatian Pelican, Ruddy Shelduck.

Among the mammal varieties you can expect to see the Shiraz wild sheep, wild goat, wild boar, Goitred Gazelle, and Persian fallow deer, and there's always the tantalizing possibility of a thrilling encounter with a wolf or leopard.

As well as fantastic wildlife, impressive landscapes and spectacular scenery, you will experience a warm welcome from the inhabitants of this land so rich in history and culture. The man-made wonders in store for you are as diverse and impressive as the natural

splendour - so prepare to be amazed on a regular basis!

Upon early arrival in Tehran, you will be met at the airport and transferred to your hotel. Our wildlife exploration starts with a drive northwards to the Dasht-e Naz and Miyan Kaleh wildlife refuge, where we spend one night in the hotel before heading on to Iran's oldest National Park at Golestan.

This mountainous region provides a magnificent diverse natural habitat for animals including leopard, gazelle, wild sheep, ibex, wild boar and wolves; and birds such as the colourful kingfisher, Golden Eagle, Imperial Eagle, Black Vulture and the Siberian Crane. Here we stay overnight in a local house for two nights and then drive to protected area of Khoshyelagh, Persian Cheetah, one habitat of the cheetah, where your guide will help you to identify many of the species which make up its abundant bird population, and where we spend two nights in a local house.

We then drive back to Tehran for an overnight stay, before flying down to Shiraz, with its beautiful gardens. This City of Poets, Roses and Nightingales is the birthplace, and final resting place, of the greatest Persian poets, Hafez and Saidi. From here, we visit an astonishing array of unmissable sites: 2,500 years of history at Persepolis, and Naghsh-e Rostam, with the tombs of the Achaemnid kings, the Sasanid epigraphs and reliefs, and the Zoroastrian Kaba monuments. Nearby Passargade has the tomb of the Cyrus the Great, the holy shrine of Shah-e-Chragh and the major site of pilgrimage, Eram Garden, an enchanting building with a beautiful eastern garden.

Our journey continues in the direction of the Zagros Mountains to meet the colourfully clad Ghashghei, among the most illustrious of Iran's five hundred tribes, transporting their entire household on horseback, and by camel, mule and donkey, just as they have for centuries. Nomadic kilims have a special beauty, and Ghashghei women are renowned for the skill and vitality of their weaving, producing magnificent rugs in glossy, vibrantly coloured wool. The central 'field' of the kilim is often filled with a host of lively motifs drawn from nature, including rosettes, floral cones, and small animals and birds.

We also have the opportunity to visit the Margun Waterfall, one of the largest in Iran. Our overnight stay is in Shar-e Kord, before our tour reaches its conclusion at Isfahan, the Jewel of Iran, a treasure-house of Islamic architecture, said to have the most beautiful mosques in the world. Our two days here will pass all too swiftly!

Please read on for itinerary, outline and prices.

ITINERARY

- Day 1**, Arrival in Tehran, You are met at the airport and transferred to the hotel.
Day 2, Drive to Sari, a delightful town on the Caspian sea, visit Dasht-e-Naz and Miyan Kaleh wildlife refuge. Overnight hotel.
Day 3, Golestan National Park, Overnight local villa.
Day 4, Golestan National Park, Overnight local villa.
Day 5, Khosh Yelagh protected area. Overnight local villa.
Day 6, Khosh Yelagh protected area. Overnight local villa.
Day 7, Drive to Tehran. Overnight hotel.
Day 8, Flight to Shiraz (07:30): Persepolis, Naghsh-e-Rostam. Overnight hotel.
Day 9, Shiraz, sightseeing. Overnight hotel.
Day 10, Drive to Isfahan visit Pasargade on the way. Overnight hotel.
Day 11, Sightseeing in Isfahan. Overnight hotel.
Day 12, Sightseeing in Isfahan. Overnight hotel.
Day 13, Drive to Tehran. Dinner in a local restaurant in Darband, a popular resort at the foot of Alborz Mountains. Overnight hotel.
Day 14, Transfer to the airport for the flight home.

Please read on for outline and prices.

DURATION: 14 Days**Dates 2018**

15 Apr – 28 Apr

Dates 2019

14 Apr – 27 Apr

TOUR COST: £2650

Single supplement: £250

Accommodation: 9 nights in hotels, 4 nights in a local house or villa.

Equipment: Group camping equipment is provided. Please bring your own sleeping bags if you wish to have a personal one.

Transport: Four-wheel-drive vehicles are used in the remoter areas, and cars or a minibus in the cities.

Please note: The tour itinerary may vary due to local conditions beyond our control. As soon as we are aware of any change, we shall make every effort to inform you at the earliest opportunity.

What is included in the tour prices:

Accommodation (sharing in twin room)

Airport transfers

Breakfast,

Lunch, dinner on days 3,4,5 and 6

Transport by car/minibus, four-wheel-drive vehicles

All excursions and sightseeing, entrance fees, portorage

English-speaking guide

Persian Voyages

REF: WMN14

What is not included:

International flight
Visa fee
Travel insurance

Persian Voyages

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Please continue for itinerary

Persian Voyages

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