



Iran



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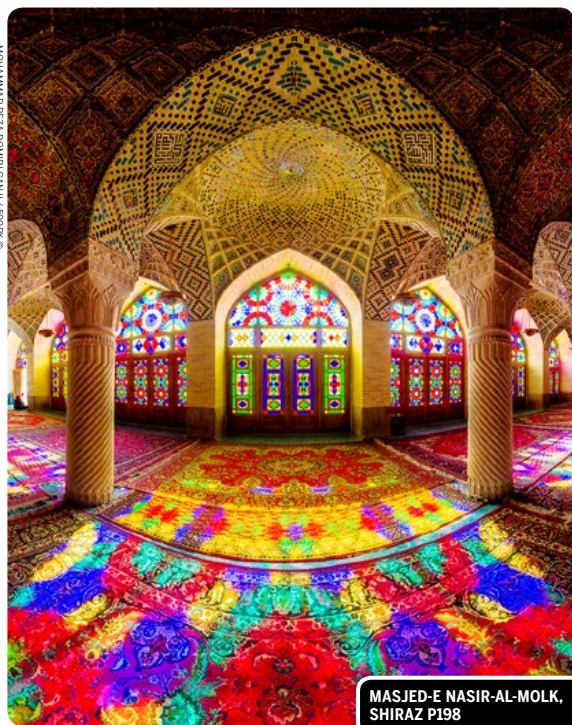
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Itineraries



2
WEEKS

Classic Iran

In two weeks it's possible to see the jewels of Iran's rich history, but you'll need to keep moving.

Start in **Tehran** and spend two days seeing the sights, including the Golestan Palace, the Treasury of National Jewels and Grand Bazaar. Take a bus to **Kashan**, where you can explore the bazaar, check out the Qajar-era traditional houses and chill out in the Fin Garden.

Make a pit stop at the mosque and tomb in **Natanz** en route to architecturally magnificent **Esfahan** and spend three days exploring the blue-tiled mosques of Naqsh-e Jahan (Imam) Square, the bustling Bazar-e Bozorg, the sublime bridges across the Zayandeh River and the Armenian community at Jolfa.

Head to the desert trading city of **Yazd** for three days wandering the maze of lanes, gazing at the Masjed-e Jameh (Jameh Mosque) and climbing to the Zoroastrian Towers of Silence. For a change of pace, stop in the desert village of **Fahraj** before spending a day visiting ancient **Pasargadae** and **Persepolis** on the way to Shiraz. Spend two days in **Shiraz**, where you can see the Zand-era gardens and bazaar, and wander the old city. Fly back to Tehran.

21
DAYS

Go West

This intriguing meander west is ideal for those who've seen the main desert city sights or are confident in navigating through areas often unaccustomed to foreigners. The route over mountains and valleys boasts nine World Heritage sites. The remotest sections will require charter taxis. Note that in winter, mountain roads can be cut off by snow.

Starting in **Tehran**, head west to **Qazvin** and spend the afternoon exploring the historic city, before driving into the **Alamut Valley** and hiking for two days among the ruined Castles of the Assassins. Continue across to the Caspian, recovering at a homestay near **Ramsar**, then onto vibrant **Rasht**, conquering the mountain fortress of **Qal'eh Rudkhan** before spending a pleasant afternoon strolling the teashops of photogenic **Masuleh**. Forsake the dull coast and jump a savari inland, up through nomad country to **Khal Khal**, then onto **Ardabil** to visit the magnificent Sheikh Safi-od-Din Mausoleum. Savari-hop the scenic back route to **Kaleybar** via Meshgin Shahr. Climb the breathtaking **Babak Castle**, then hire a driver for the sublime Aras River Valley run to **Jolfa** and the magnificent **Church of St Stephanos**.

Complete the Armenian church trifecta of **Qareh Kalisa** and **Dzor Dzor Chapel** on your way to **Maku**, via **Khoy** and **Chaldoran**. An easy half day to **Tabriz** and its bazaar leaves the afternoon for exploring troglodyte **Kandovan**. More savari-hopping across high landscapes due south to **Takab** and the starkly beautiful **Takht-e Soleiman**, once the world's greatest Zoroastrian fire-temple complex. Continue on across the incredible landscape to **Zanjan**. Hire a driver for the trip to **Hamadan** via the magnificent Mongol-era Oljeitu Mausoleum at **Soltaniyeh** and the remarkable **Katale Khor Caves**. Check out the Bu'Ali Sina Mausoleum in Hamadan before taking a speedy savari to hospitable **Sanandaj**.

Spend an afternoon in **Palangan** before heading to **Marivan** and the scenic road thru **Howraman** to **Paveh**, via Kurdish mountain villages. At **Kermanshah**, sneak a peak at Taq-e Bustan's stone carvings and the scaffolding at **Bisotun** before you cross the mighty Zagros Mountains to **Khorramabad** and its fortress. Savari to **Shush** to wander ancient **Susa**, then hire a car to the 3000-year-old ziggurat of **Choqa Zanbil** and the Sassanian-cum-Roman engineering of the **Shushtar hydraulic system**. Take a savari to **Andimeshk** and your evening train back to Tehran.

10
DAYS

Mashhad Pilgrimage

Take the train or bus from **Tehran** to **Gorgan**, nestled attractively in the Alborz Mountains. Gorgan makes a great base for visiting the Turkmen steppe and the remote Mil-e Radkan tower. If you're impressed by this tower, you'll want to visit the incredible 1000-year-old tomb-tower of Mil-e Gonbad, in **Gonbad-e Kavus**, before visiting the forested mountains of **Golestan National Park**, perhaps staying at the Turkmen Ecologicalodge.

Next up, travel to Iran's holiest city of **Mashhad**, where you can revel in the ecstasy of pilgrims in the stunning and massive Haram-e Razavi complex and visit the beautifully proportioned Boq'eh-ye Khajeh Rabi mausoleum. Mashhad is a great base for exploring the hinterlands by foot, bicycle or horseback. Nearby **Kang** is a photogenic stepped village of stacked mud-brick homes. The mausoleum of 11th-century poet, Ferdosi is found in **Tus**, while Omar Khayyam has his tomb in **Neishabur**. The impressive mountain cliffs of **Kalat Naderi** lie to the north.

Mashhad is a gateway to Central Asia; otherwise fly back to Tehran or continue south by bus or train into the desert.

12
DAYS

Desert Detour

If you've ever dreamt of the oasis towns of *The Thousand and One Nights* or are drawn to hospitable homestays, this trip is for you. It's doable by taking infrequent buses, but the odd taxi *dar bast* can reduce waiting time. Avoid the summer heat by travelling between October and April.

Start in **Esfahan** and take a bus to **Toudeshk** for a night and a morning in the shifting sands of the Varzaneh Desert, before continuing to see the traditional houses of **Na'in**. From Na'in take the bus east to **Khur**, where you get a taxi to **Farahzad** and/or **Garmeh** for desert homestays that redefine hospitality; plan for three days all up.

From Garmeh, head west via **Tabas** and the remarkable 'forgotten' villages of **Old Deyhuk** and **Esfandiar**, continuing on to **Birjand** with its impressive fortress-restaurant. From there don't miss an oasis night at **Deh Salm** before crossing the Lut Desert with its extraordinary **Kaluts** (giant 'sandcastles'). After bazaaring **Kerman** and daytripping to **Rayen fortress**, end your trip in a traditional hotel in **Yazd**, perhaps with a side trip to the fire temple at **Chak Chak**.

Map Legend

Sights

- Beach
- Bird Sanctuary
- Buddhist
- Castle/Palace
- Christian
- Confucian
- Hindu
- Islamic
- Jain
- Jewish
- Monument
- Museum/Gallery/Historic Building
- Ruin
- Shinto
- Sikh
- Taoist
- Winery/Vineyard
- Zoo/Wildlife Sanctuary
- Other Sight

Activities, Courses & Tours

- Body surfing
- Diving
- Canoeing/Kayaking
- Course/Tour
- Sento Hot Baths/Onsen
- Skiing
- Snorkelling
- Surfing
- Swimming/Pool
- Walking
- Windsurfing
- Other Activity

Sleeping

- Sleeping
- Camping

Eating

- Eating

Drinking & Nightlife

- Drinking & Nightlife
- Cafe

Entertainment

- Entertainment

Shopping

- Shopping

Information

- Bank
- Embassy/Consulate
- Hospital/Medical
- Internet
- Police
- Post Office
- Telephone
- Toilet
- Tourist Information
- Other Information

Geographic

- Beach
- Gate
- Hut/Shelter
- Lighthouse
- Lookout
- Mountain/Volcano
- Oasis
- Park
- Pass
- Picnic Area
- Waterfall

Population

- Capital (National)
- Capital (State/Province)
- City/Large Town
- Town/Village

Transport

- Airport
- Border crossing
- Bus
- Cable car/Funicular
- Cycling
- Ferry
- Metro station
- Monorail
- Parking
- Petrol station
- Subway station
- Taxi
- Train station/Railway
- Tram
- Underground station
- Other Transport

Routes

- Tollway
- Freeway
- Primary
- Secondary
- Tertiary
- Lane
- Unsealed road
- Road under construction
- Plaza/Mall
- Steps
- Tunnel
- Pedestrian overpass
- Walking Tour
- Walking Tour detour
- Path/Walking Trail

Boundaries

- International
- State/Province
- Disputed
- Regional/Suburb
- Marine Park
- Cliff
- Wall

Hydrography

- River, Creek
- Intermittent River
- Canal
- Water
- Dry/Salt/Intermittent Lake
- Reef

Areas

- Airport/Runway
- Beach/Desert
- Cemetery (Christian)
- Cemetery (Other)
- Glacier
- Mudflat
- Park/Forest
- Sight (Building)
- Sportsground
- Swamp/Mangrove

Note: Not all symbols displayed above appear on the maps in this book



Jenny Walker

Central Iran A member of the British Guild of Travel Writers and the Outdoor Writers and Photographers Guild, Jenny has written extensively on the Middle East for Lonely Planet for more than a decade. With her husband, Wing Commander (retired) Sam Owen, she also authored *Off-Road in the Sultanate of Oman* – a country they have made their home for nearly 20 years.



Steve Waters

Western Iran Travel and adventure have always been Steve's life, and he couldn't imagine a world without them. Steve has been using Lonely Planet guidebooks for more than 30 years in places as diverse as Iran, Central Asia, Kamchatka, Tuva, the Himalaya, Canada, Patagonia, the Australian Outback, NE Asia, Myanmar and the Sahara. Little wonder then that he finally got a gig with the company! Steve has contributed to *Iran*, *Indonesia* and the past four editions of *Western Australia*, and

come any September you're likely to find him in a remote gorge somewhere in the Kimberley.



OUR STORY

A beat-up old car, a few dollars in the pocket and a sense of adventure. In 1972 that's all Tony and Maureen Wheeler needed for the trip of a lifetime – across Europe and Asia overland to Australia. It took several months, and at the end – broke but inspired – they sat at their kitchen table writing and stapling together their first travel guide, *Across Asia on the Cheap*. Within a week they'd sold 1500 copies. Lonely Planet was born.

Today, Lonely Planet has offices in Franklin, London, Melbourne, Oakland, Dublin, Beijing and Delhi, with more than 600 staff and writers. We share Tony's belief that 'a great guidebook should do three things: inform, educate and amuse'.

OUR WRITERS



Simon Richmond

Tehran Journalist and photographer Simon Richmond has specialised as a travel writer since the early 1990s and first worked for Lonely Planet in 1999 on their *Central Asia* guide. He's long since stopped counting the number of guidebooks he's researched and written for the company, but countries covered including Australia, China, India, Iran, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar (Burma), Russia, Singapore, South Africa and Turkey. For Lonely Planet's website, he's

penned features on topics from the world's best swimming pools to the joys of urban sketching.



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Mark Elliott

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OVER MORE
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