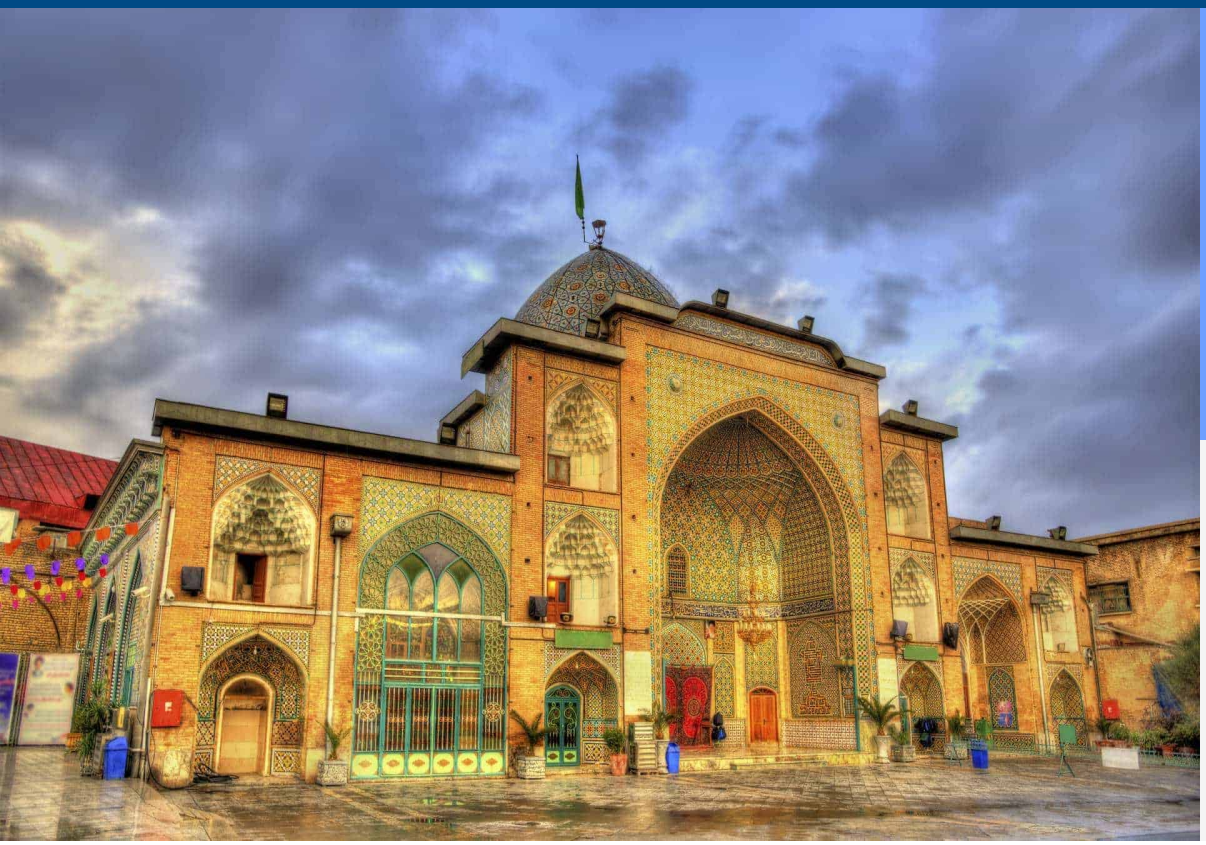
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30th December 2024

17 days
Duration

Iran
Destination

Level 2 - Moderate
Activity

# Iran Culture and History Escorted Small Group Tour for seniors

Sep 30 2024 to Oct 16 2024




## Iran Culture and History escorted small group tour for seniors.

Odyssey offers easy, convenient, and relaxed escorted small group tours across Iran and beyond in the Middle East. We explore Iran's natural beauty, its ancient and Imperial heritage, its World Heritage Sites, and world famous cities, all with some truly spectacular scenery along the way. This and more is all waiting to be explored on one of

Odyssey's small group tours of Iran, designed for the senior traveller, and led by experienced, and enthusiastic like minded people.

Discover the fascinating history and culture this country has to offer on our Iran small group tour for seniors. This escorted educational tour is perfect for mature and senior travellers with an active mind, seeking to learn about one of the world's oldest civilisations, a fascinating country with many an ancient city to explore as you learn about central Iran. We regard this as one of the best travel tours in Iran for the senior traveller.

Travel on escorted Iran tour with us on a seventeen-day trip. Odyssey's Iran tour is a tour package that introduces the traveller to a guided tour of Iranian culture, focusing on the west of Iran, taking in ten key destinations and must see places . This Iran small group tour for seniors introduces several key UNESCO World heritage site of ancient Persia to the traveller with a knowledgable tour guide available at each location for Odyssey's Travellers to gain an appreciation of the history of Iran and Iranian culture.

Iran is located in southwestern Asia or the middle east, once home to one of the world's oldest civilisations. Iran in ancient Persia was the centre of a great empire for many centuries. At its height, Ancient Persia 's imperial territory stretched from the modern-day Balkan Peninsula in Europe, to the Indus River Valley in northwest India, and south to Egypt .

A country with a dramatic and colourful centuries-old history is bound to have incredible places to visit, ranging from the beautiful landscapes of the desert to persian architecure of merit . Iran is definitely no exception. Odyssey's Iran tour package has been refined over a number of years to provide the traveller with an insightful itinerary for an Iran tour. Odyssey offers muliple Iran tours each year for senior traveller interested in a small group Iran tour.







## Iran Travel Tour Highlights

Our Iran tour begins and ends in Tehran, the modern capital of this ancient land. The itinerary for this Iran tour has the group tour leave

Tehran with a tour guide to travel to nine destinations in central Iran and Western Iran. including two nights in Hamadan, three in Esfahan , two in Yazd and two in Shiraz. Along the way, we take in many of Iran's UNESCO world heritage site (s). The lavish Golestan Palace , home of the Qajars and originally built in the Safavid era, exhibits the accumulated power of the Persian empire, the wealth and extravagance of the Persian monarchy. The palace of the persian empire is noted for its incorporation of Persian and Western design. Another monument that is considered a masterpiece of Persian architecture and a treasure of Islamic architecture is the 16 th century Shah Mosque (also known as Imam Mosque or the Royal Mosque ) located on the Naghsh-i Jahan Square ("Image of the World", also known as Imam Square) in Isfahan . The Imam Square and the grand mosque are products of the massive urban planning undertaken in 1598, when Shah Abbas I moved the capital of Persia from Qazvin to Isfahan in an effort to avoid assaults by the Ottomans and to control the Persian Gulf.







Within this Iran tour package is also included the UNESCO world heritage site Pasargadae, where Cyrus the Great, founder of the Achaemenid dynasty, is entombed. A highlight of any Iran tour is the visit to the UNESCO World heritagelisted Persepolis , founded by Darius I in 518 BCE. Persepolis , the capital built by the Achaemenid kings, is located about 60 kilometres northeast of Shiraz. It was built on an immense half-artificial, half-natural terrace. The importance and quality of the monumental ruins make it a unique archaeological site where your tour guide is often effusive about the history and place of Persepolis in the history of ancient Persia.

On this Iran small group tour for seniors we also enjoy a guided tour of Takht-e Soleiman, the Soltaniyeh Dome, Bisotun, the Fire Temple and the Towers of Silence.

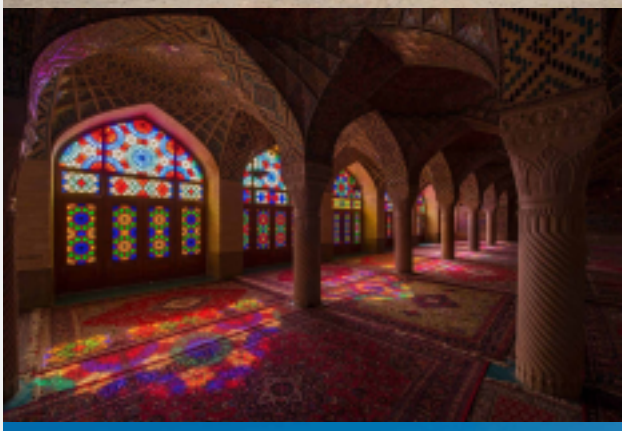
## The Persian Garden

In addition, we visit several examples of that great addition to world horticulture – the Persian Garden . Water plays a central role in the persian garden of Iran, and it is reflected in the chahar bagh ("fourfold garden"), a model of garden philosophy and design used as a blueprint for landscaping throughout the Arab world and former Moorish territories

in Asia and Europe.

The chahar bagh has its roots in the 6 th Century palace gardens of the Achaemenid Empire. The gardens of Cyrus the Great in Pasargadae share the same layout: they have a source of water in the centre (such as a fountain) that flows into four narrow canals, running at right angles and dividing the garden into four beds. The gardens are also marked with a walled enclosure, providing shade and a respite from the hot weather.







### Iran City Tour, Ancient Civilisation, Rural Life

Led by our local guide and accompanied by an Odyssey program leader, our tour takes in the great cities of Iran : Tehran , Esfahan, and Shiraz . In Tehran , the program includes a trip to the National Museum, to see its archaeological treasures including glassware, ceramics, sculptures and mosaics from the persian empire. In the city of Esfahan we walk with the tour guide wacross Esfahan‘s beautiful bridges, and explore the Armenian quarter, as well as the major sights surrounding the main square.

However, we don’t just study the major cities. Travellers also have the opportunity to study the country’s ancient Persian civilisations, as well as its Islamic present. Our small group Iranian tour affords travellers the opportunity to experience rural life as wellas a enjoying a diet of Persian food as part of the Iran package offered to on this group tour. We visit the ancient village of Masuleh, set on a steep slope of the Alborz Mountains, and Abyaneh, whose inhabitants still speak a dialect sprinkled with words from Middle Persian. There are also visits to historic sites, mosques , gardens, bazaars, and tea houses. Together, we will experience life in a country that has an incredible history and is undergoing significant changes.

## Departures for Iran Tours

Odyssey’s affordable and educational Iran tour package has been running for over 10 years. Should you choose to travelon this Iran package you draw from our years of experience as an independent tour

operator offering a cultural tour to explore and learn about Iranian culture and ancient Persia. Odyssey Traveller has a minimum of two departures of the Iran Culture and History Escorted small group tours each year. We offer the Iran tour package to a maximum of 15 people each time. Additionally, Odyssey program leaders are aware of Iranian culture and trained to assist you with local etiquette and customs to ensure that you enjoy your vacation experience whilst on one of our Iranian tours for mature and senior travelers . This information will form part of your pre-travel departure pack. Our itinerary, is a combination of day tour(s) and overnight trips, is suitable for mature travellers, either couples or singles.



Here is the testimony of one Odyssey traveller from our 2019 tour:

> *Of our many travels, our trip to Iran was among the most memorable. The people, the country, the scenery were all wonderful, we felt very safe at all times. The people welcomed us to their country and wanted to engage in discussion every day. They were very friendly. Our guide and driver were excellent, so much history to absorb. Well worth the experience.* – Kate and Kevin J. April 2019

If you want to learn more about Iran, read our country profile. We also prepared educative articles for our senior travellers for example on the Safavids in Persia, the history of Persian carpets, and you can browse all of our articles on Iran.

For more details about this tour, click the ‘Top 5’ or ‘Itinerary’ buttons above! If you’re keen to experience this tour, please call or send an email. Or, to book, simply fill in the form on the right hand side of this page.

## Tour Notes

- Group size limited to 15.

- Itineraries may change if flight schedules, site availability, and other inclusions have to be amended prior to departure.

## Highlights

1. Explore the UNESCO World Heritage listed sites of Persepolis, Pasargadae, Takht-e Soleiman, the Soltaniyeh Dome, Bisotun, the Golestan Palace, and the Fire Temple and the Towers of Silence in Yazd
2. Discover Iran's splendid ancient and modern mosques, minarets, mausoleums, and markets
3. Fall in love with Esfahan, home to Naqsh-e Jahan Square, surrounded by covered bazaars and home to the architectural jewels of the Safavid Empire
4. Visit Yazd, an historic Silk Road oasis town, home to the oldest Zoroastrian fire temple and the haunting Towers of Silence
5. Be inspired by Shiraz, known as the city of poets, literature, wine, and flowers, visiting two famous Persian Gardens, the Bagh-e Eram and the Narenjestan-e Ghavam

## Itinerary

**Day 1**

**Locations:** Tehran

**Overview:**

Odyssey Travellers small group escorted tour to Iran commences in Tehran. Your tour leader provides a short introduction to Iran and Iranian culture followed by a welcome dinner of Persian food this evening.

Transfers to the hotel are included for those travelling on Odyssey's designated flight following arrival at Tehran's international airport (see details below). For those arriving on a different flight, transfers are not included. If time permits, we will have a short visit to the Sa'ad Abad

Museum complex, otherwise it will be included on the following day or at the end of the tour.

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**Accommodation:**

2 nights at the Grand II 4 Star Hotel or similar accommodation.

**Day 2**

**Locations:** Tehran

**Overview:**

Today we explore the sights of Tehran including the National Museum, the Carpet Museum to learn about the history of the Persian carpet, and the Carpet & Glassware Museum.

**Accommodation:**

Overnight at the Grand II 4 Star Hotel or similar accommodation.

**Day 3**

**Locations:** Anzali

**Overview:**

Today this small group Iran tour travels North with your tour guide via Rasht to Bandar-e Anzali (Anzali Port), on the southern shore of the Caspian Sea. Owing to its position and climate, the surrounding districts are characterised by green fields and forests. En route we visit the village of Masuleh, built into the steep slope of the Alborz Mountain. Here, the roof of one house is the yard of the house above and also the pavement in the village!

**Accommodation:**

1 night at the Sefid Kenar Hotel, or similar accommodation.

**Day 4**

**Locations:** Zanjan

**Overview:**

The group starts the day with a short walk along Anzali's waterfront, then drive to the province of Zanjan. Zanjan is located northwest of Iran, and its geographical conditions, abundant water sources, and fertile soil have made the province suitable for farming and animal husbandry. Most villages of the province are of ancient origin. Here we visit the UNESCO world heritage listed Soltaniyeh Dome, which lies on a plain between two mountains. The capital in Persiaduring the time of the Ilkhanid Mongols from 1302, the mausoleum of Soltaniyeh has the world's third largest brick dome. It was described by historian Michael Axworthy (2007) as "one of the grandest monuments of Iranian persian architecture."

**Accommodation:**

1 night at the Zanjan Bozorg Hotel or similar accommodation.

**Day 5**

**Locations:** Takab

**Overview:**

As part of this Iran package our itinerary today takes this group tour to the great Sassanian religious site of Takht-e Soleiman (the 'Throne of Solomon") en route to Takab. The UNESCO world heritage listed religious site of Takht-e Soleiman dates back to 800 BCE. The water filled crater and fire temple located here were of great symbolic significance to the Zoroastrian and are associated with the volcanic history of the area. We spend the night in Takab, a hilly market town.

**Accommodation:**

1 night at the Ranji Hotel or similar accommodation.

**Day 6**

**Locations:** Hamadan

**Overview:**

Day 6 of this Iran tour for seniors travels to Hamadan via the Alisadr Cave, the largest cave in the world containing water. We explore the caves by paddle boat, and have lunch at the site. We then continue to Hamadan, known to classicists as Ecbatana, and the capital of Persia under the Achaemenids. It is situated in the desert on the Royal Road built by Darius the Great between the Mesopotamia and the Iranian Plateau in central Iran.

**Accommodation:**

2 nights at the Baba Taher Hotel, or similar accommodation.

**Day 7**

**Locations:** Hamadan

**Overview:**

Your tour guide leads this Iran tour today southwest to Kermanshah. En route we visit the Temple of Anahita in Kangavar, and the Sassanian bas-reliefs at Taq-e Bostan. After lunch we visit the UNESCO world heritage site of Bisotun to see its bas-reliefs and cuneiform inscriptions of the Persian empire.

**Accommodation:**

Overnight at the Baba Taher Hotel, Hamadan, or similar accommodation.

**Day 8**

**Locations:** Kashan

**Overview:**

Today the drive is through some of beautiful landscapes in the southeast that leads to Kashan, the first of the large oasis towns along the Qom-Kerman road which runs along the edge of the Dasht-e Kevir desert. Here we enjoy the restful shade of cupola-covered houses and the coolness of a pleasant persian garden with water fountains. We visit

the acclaimed Persian garden called the Fin Garden, designed for Shah Abbas I, as well as Khan-e Tabatabi and Khan-e Borujerdi, merchant houses built in the late 1800s. The greenery and lively atmosphere of this well-tended oasis stands out against the the parched immensities of the surrounding desert.The merchant houses are a popular Iran destination for travellers. Tonight we stay at a beautiful Kashani traditional house.

**Accommodation:**

1 night at the Negin Traditional House, or similar accommodation.

**Day 9**

**Locations:** Esfahan

**Overview:**

This group tour continues to travel south, visiting Abyaneh village on the way to Esfahan. A common saying during the Safavid (1502-1722) period was that “Esfahan was half the world.” Today the city is still Iran’s most beautiful city. The wonderful buildings may be attributed to Shah Abbas who made the town his capital in 1598. These have added to the considerable wealth of history already preserved in buildings from earlier periods. On arrival we enjoy a guided tour of the Vank Cathedral and the old Armenian quarter of the city.

In the evening we enjoy a guided tour of the Khaju Bridge, built under Shah Abbas II. The bridge doubles as a dam, and has always been as much a meeting place as a bearer of traffic. The bridge features two levels of terraced arcades, the lower containing locks to regulate the water flow. One can still see original paintings, tiles, and the remains of stone seats built for Shah Abbas II to sit on and admire the views. A pavilion was built in the centre exclusively for his pleasure. We also visit Sio She Pol (33 arches) Bridge before checking in to our hotel.

**Accommodation:**

2 nights at the Piroozy Hotel, or similar accommodation.

**Day 10**

**Locations:** Esfahan

**Overview:**

The itinerary provides for a full days group tour of Esfahan with our tour guide. The group tour begins with visits to Naqsh-e Jahan Square, and home to the Ali Qapu, Imam and Sheikh Lotfollah mosque(s) as well as the Gheisarieh Bazaar. After lunch, we will visit Chehel Sotoun (Forty Pillars reception hall and pleasure pavilion) and have some free time before dinner to explore the bazaar, exploring an opportunity to learn about the history of the Persian carpet.

**Accommodation:**

Overnight at the Piroozy Hotel, or similar accommodation.

**Day 11**

**Locations:** Yazd

**Overview:**

Today we continue travelling south to Yazd, one of the Iranian strongholds of Zoroastrian, famous for its fire temples. En route we stop at Meybod to visit the Narein Castle.

The ancient Iranians venerated holy fires, and in Yazd, one such sanctuary has survived through the ages, although the building itself is pretty recent. However the fire has been been burning in Yazd for at least seven centuries.

If time permits, we'll visit to the Towers of Silence on the outskirts of Yazd, before checking into our hotel (if not, we will visit them the following day). The towers were used by the Zoroastrian to dispose of the dead to avoid contaminating the soil with a body. Until this custom was forbidden in 1970, the Zoroastrian expose their dead to the birds in "towers of silence" (*dakhmeh*). There are two towers near Yazd, built in the nineteenth century according to a design from India, where many Zoroastrian live. At the terrace at the top, the dead were exposed, and devoured by birds. In this way, neither the earth nor the sacred fire were

soiled.

**Accommodation:**

Two nights at the Safaiieeh 4 Star Hotel, or similar accommodation.

**Day 12**

**Locations:** Yazd

**Overview:**

Out in the desert and off the beaten path of the travellers is a fascinating Iran destination and worthy of a visit on any trip. Yazd with its adobe buildings, the windy narrow street plans, wind towers, and the qanat water supply system are a wonderful reflection of Persian architecture and ingenuity as a response to the local hot desert environment.

The old city of Yazd is where with your tour guide this small group tour of Iran for seniors has a full itinerary planned. Yazd was a branch leading to India of the Silk road, and was visited by the Venetian Marco Polo. Its ancient city centre and Persian Architecture facilitated UNESCO World heritage status. The lanes of the bazaar twist and turn and eventually lead to the Friday Mosque, regarded as one of the finest in Iran. The tall façade, the shallow dome and the interior of the sanctuary hall all sparkle with glazed tile. Most of the tilework dates to the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, when the art was at its height and the city rich; no cost was spared in assembling thousands of precisely cut pieces of colored tile into large mosaics of geometric or floral design. In return for a small tip, the custodian unlocks the steps to the roof, and may even allow one to climb a minaret. In the old days, a muezzin would scale this five times a day to call his community to prayer; his modern successor understandably prefers to issue the summons from below, with the aid of records and a loudspeaker. Its a long trudge up a tight spiral staircase to the narrow balcony, apparently you hug the wall while admiring the view. The city sprawls below, dun-colored like the desert and is simply fascinating!

We also visit the Bagh-e Dolat Garden and Yazd’s Ateshkadeh ( Zoroastrian Fire Temple) where the fire has burned continously for

seven centuries.

**Accommodation:**

Overnight at the Safaiieeh 4 Star Hotel, or similar accommodation.

**Day 13**

**Locations:** Shiraz

**Overview:**

Today we continue on through the beautiful landscapes of the desert to Shiraz. The itinerary has our tour guide stop en route to visit the ancient Abarqu Cypress tree, and the UNESCO world heritage site of Pasargadae, where Cyrus the Great, founder of the Achaemenid dynasty is entombed.

We arrive in Shiraz, city of poets, late in the afternoon. Shiraz has a rich and turbulent history and is considered to be an important part of the history of ancient Persia. It was spared destruction by Genghis Khan's forces as well as the forces of Timur who followed 160 years later. Several earthquakes and Afghan raids destroyed the area, however it was resurrected as the Iranian capital in the mid 18th century during the Zand dynasty.

**Accommodation:**

3 nights at the Chamran New 5 Star Hotel, or similar accommodation.

**Day 14**

**Locations:** Shiraz

**Overview:**

Today this Iran tour arrives at an Iran destination considered to be a highlight for any group tour and for the tour guideleading a tour of Persia . Out in the beautiful landscapes of the desert, our tour package itinerary has the group spend time on a private tour with a guide of Persepolis. This is one of key highlights of the Persian empire and of Persian architecturefor many travellers. A UNESCO world heritage site, Persepolis was founded by Darius I in 518 BCE. Persepolis, the capital of the Achaemenid Empire, is located about 60 kilometres northeast of Shiraz. It was built on an immense half-artificial, half-natural terrace.

The importance and quality of the monumental ruins which where preserved under the desert sand for centuries make Persepolis a unique archaeological site in Iranian culture and ancient Persia.

Late in the afternoon, our tour guide escorts the group around the Royal Necropolis (Naghsh-e-Rostam), before driving back to Shiraz. In Shiraz in the cooler part of the day the itinerary has a guided tour of the Persian Garden reffered to as the Eram Garden (Paradise Garden), followed by Nasir-o-Molk (Pink Mosque) and the Narenjestan-e Ghavam (Narenjestan Palace). We also visit the Zand citadel, the Arg-e Karim Khan, as well as the tombs of Hafez, a 14th century poet, and Sa'di, a 13th century poet.

**Accommodation:**

Overnight at the Chamran New 5 Start Hotel, or similar accommodation.

**Day 15**

**Locations:** Shiraz

**Overview:**

On day 15, this small group Iran tour takes a scenic drive west of Shiraz to take a guided tour of the ancient city of Bishapur (Shapur's City), the capital under the Sassanian king Shapur I. Shapur's armies defeated the Romans three times. Shapur had this city built by Roman soldiers who had been captured after the defeat of the Roman emperor Valerian in 260. It was here that the Roman General Valerian spent his final days in captivity.

What is fascinating is that many aspects of Bishapur's architecture look Roman and do not belong to Iranian building traditions or refelect typical Persian architecture of the period. This city is full of strong Hellenistic-Roman and Persian influences in the architecture of its temple, audience hall, and defence structures. And the layout of the city is what specialists call the "Hippodamian Plan", which means that the city looks like a gridiron, while the cities of ancient Persiawere usually were circular in design. The core of the city was the old castle, situated on a steep rock, which is in itself one of the most interesting geological

features of the southern Zagros.

**Accommodation:**

Overnight at the Chamran New 5 Start Hotel, or similar accommodation.

**Day 16**

**Locations:** Tehran

**Overview:**

This morning we will complete our trip to Shiraz. Your Iran tour will take the short flight to Tehran in the afternoon.

**Accommodation:**

1 night at the Grand II 4 Star Hotel, or similar accommodation.

**Day 17**

**Locations:** Tehran

**Overview:**

This morning we visit the National Jewel Museum. Our tour will end with a transfer to the airport for those booked on the evening flight (as advised by Odyssey). For those departing on a different flight, transfers are not included.

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## Inclusions / Exclusions

**What's included in our Iranian  Tour**

- 16 nights of hotel accommodation.
- 16 breakfasts, 16 lunches, and 16 dinners.
- 1 internal flight in economy class and taxes.
- Transport in comfortable and modern coaches.
- All lectures, excursions, entrance fees, and local guides.

- Gratuities and necessary tips.
- Services of tour leader for the duration of tour.
- Visa Reference Number and supporting documents, required to apply for the Visa.

**What's not included in our  Iranian Tour**

- International airfares and departure taxes.
- Comprehensive travel insurance.
- Airport transfers if not on selected flights (as advised).
- Items of a personal nature such as telephone calls and laundry.
- Visa fee.
- Visa service (Odyssey offer Visa Service at additional cost).

**Level 2 - Moderate**

Participants must be able to carry their own luggage, climb and descend stairs, be in good health, mobile and able to participate in 3-5 hours of physical activity per day, the equivalent of walking/hiking up to 8 kilometres on uneven ground.

Please do not hesitate to contact us with any requests for further information about this tour or any others offered by Odyssey Travel.