



## Persian Explorer

Experience opulent ancient Persia and the wonders of modern Iran by train. From the colossal gates of Persepolis to the lush gardens of Shiraz, embark upon an unforgettable railroad journey.

Visit sprawling archeological treasures dating back millennia on this exclusive 2,700-mile trip aboard the Persian Explorer. Marvel at the grandeur of Isfahan's royal architecture and take in the untamed vistas of the Alborz Mountains, traveling in the contemporary comfort of your private train.

### What makes your journey unique

- Traveling by private train, exploring 3,000 years of Persian history with ease and experiencing some of the most breathtaking scenery on Earth.
- Standing in the middle of Isfahan's vast Imam Square, one of the largest and most beautiful public spaces in the world.
- Wandering through the epic ruins of the ancient city of Persepolis.
- Relaxing under the desert stars next to a nomad campfire.
- Tasting caviar fresh from the Caspian Sea.
- The intoxicating perfume of a bustling bazaar or relaxing in a Beduin tent—live your very own 1001 Nights.



### Dates

- 13 Apr - 24 Apr 2017 (12 days)
- 19 Oct - 30 Oct 2017 (12 days)

### Info & Booking

Frank Niggemann

## Itinerary

### **Day 1, Tehran**

Arrive in the Iranian capital Tehran to begin your Persian adventure. Relax after your flight in this bustling city, a modern contrast to the trip to your very own 1001 Nights that awaits.

Overnight: Laleh Hotel or similar.

### **Day 2, Sari and Alborz Mountains**

The Persian Explorer train heads northward through the jagged Alborz Mountains—home to Iran's highest peaks. You experience spectacular views. From magical green forests and rolling red hills, to glittering blue lagoons patterned with poplars and reeds.

You feel the climate slowly change—you're at an altitude of almost 8,000 feet as the Caspian Sea nears. With this tremendous body of water in the distance, the city of Sari is a perfect place to stop. You take a tour of the city and enjoy a meal including a delicious sampling of this region's rightfully famous caviar.

Overnight on board. Meals included: breakfast (B), lunch (L) and dinner (D)

### **Day 3, Mashhad**

Iran's second city Mashhad is one of the seven holy sites of Shiite Islam. Tour the majestic shrine of Imam Reza, an important pilgrimage site. Decorated with the finest marbles and topped with a golden dome and minarets, this complex is a wonder to behold.

You visit the adjacent sanctuary, home to some of the country's most priceless works of art.

Overnight on board. (BLD)

### **Day 4, Kerman**

You travel a beige-pink landscape punctuated by windswept rocky columns, as you approach Kerman from the desert.

This provincial capital boasts a collection of awe-inspiring sights. Look up and be dazzled by the geometric splendor of the Ganjali Khan Mosque's ceiling. Shop the city's busy bazaar—the perfect place for artisanal Persian rugs. After haggling for the best price like a local, relax with a traditional cup of tea and the local delicacy kolompeh, a delicious date-filled pastry.

Overnight: Hotel Pars or similar. (BLD)

### **Day 5, Shazdeh Garden and Rayen Castle**

You make your way through blissful countryside to the Shazdeh Garden, an oasis of soothing greenery and water just outside of Mahan.

Nearby, you see the sublime turquoise-tiled dome, covered in white stars, inspired by mystic and poet Shah Nimatullah Wali. Climbing to the top, you look out upon miles of stunning scenery. Sparkling domes, dusty patchworks of desert city scape, and cool, bold mountains in the distance.

Onward, you explore Rayen Castle—a massive medieval mudbrick citadel, still standing proudly before the snow-capped peaks in the distance.

You close this exhilarating day by relaxing next to a desert nomad campfire as the amber sun sets.

Overnight on board. (BLD)

### **Day 6, Yazd, City of Fire**

Up ahead, you see tawny towers dotting the skyline of your next stop, Yazd. Innovative desert dwellers have used these wind-catchers to cool off for centuries.

This city's remote location has kept it an important center for Zoroastrianism. You discover more about this ancient faith at a tower of silence once used for funeral rites, and at a traditional fire temple, where one ritual flame has burned for over 1,500 years. Upon arrival in Isfahan, enjoy dinner under the stars in a courtyard where traveling caravans once sought refreshment.

Overnight: Hotel Kowsar or similar. (BLD)

### **Days 7 and 8, Isfahan**

Welcome to one of the most magnificent cities of the seventeenth-century. Standing in the middle of the vast Imam Square, the second-largest public space on Earth and one of its most beautiful, it's easy to understand how this UNESCO World Heritage site became known as image of the world by its many admirers.

Confirm that the grandeur of that Persian proverb still holds true, as you survey the ornate mosques, bustling bazaars and lavish gardens from the towering balcony of the Ali Qapu royal palace.

Explore the city, tempted by the charm and wares of the merchants and gold market. Be sure not to miss the Si-o-seh Pol at dusk, with this iconic bridge's 33 arches glowing gold and spanning the Zayandeh River, before your time in this unique place ends.

Overnight: Hotel Kowsar or similar and on board. (BLD)

### **Day 9, Pasargadae and Persepolis, UNESCO World Heritage Sites**

True archeological treasures await you today, as you explore the ancient cities of the Persian kings. Go first to Pasargadae, the capital created by Cyrus the Great in the sixth-century BC. His simple tomb watches over the remnants of this long-gone civilization.

Then travel to nearby Persepolis, the ceremonial center eventually ransacked by Alexander the Great. Pass huge stone gates carved with mythical creatures, stand amid palatial ruins—Apadana Palace and the Naqsh-e-Rostam necropolis—or simply wander through the streets of antiquity, taking in the immensity of this cultural wonder.

Overnight: Chamran Grand Hotel or similar. (BLD)

### **Day 10, Shiraz**

Head to Shiraz, the city of poets, and the lush greenery of a UNESCO World Heritage site: the Persian paradise gardens.

The word paradise comes from the Persian expression walled garden. Stroll past ornamental pools and date palms at the famous Eram Garden, or visit another of the several historic gardens, all offering their unique flavor of paradise.

Shiraz was fertile ground for the fourteenth-century Persian poet Hafez, now considered an Iranian national treasure. A true bon vivant, he would surely approve of you relaxing among the leafy environs at his tomb. Round off your day by experiencing one of the finest winter prayer halls in the world at Nasir-al-Molk Mosque, then a burst of green sparkle and glitter inside the stunning Shah Cheragh Mosque.

Overnight on board. (BLD)

## Day 11, Tehran

Bid farewell to the Persian Explorer, but continue your adventure back in this incredible capital.

Tehran is a busy and lively place, but it also has sanctuaries of tranquility and calm. Tour the peaceful grounds of the royal Golestan Palace before stopping in the Mirror Hall to see the opulence of the shah's life.

Or visit the city's famed National Museum, filled with priceless archeological treasures, and learn of historic milestones of your journey back in time. Equally impressive is the sweeping Azadi Tower, built in 1971 and Tehran's answer to the Arc de Triomphe in Paris.

Overnight: Hotel Laleh or similar. (BLD)

## Day 12, Farewell Iran

You transfer to the airport and look back at your railroad voyage. You've become a Persian explorer.

Cultural Considerations: Visitors to Iran are required to abide by the same rules of dress as local residents. Men should avoid shorts, as well as shirts exposing their shoulders. Women should wear headscarves covering their hair and avoid form-fitting clothing. Arms and legs must be completely covered and jackets should extend to below the waist. Alcohol is prohibited throughout the journey.

## Highlights of the journey

- Stops in Sari, Mashhad, Kerman, Mahan, Yazd, Isfahan, Shiraz and Tehran.
- Six UNESCO World Heritage sites Isfahan, Pasargadae, Persepolis, , Shiraz, Eram Garden, Golestan Palace
- Rayen Castle, a massive medieval mudbrick citadel.
- A traditional Iranian zurkhaneh (house of strength) gymnasium.
- A Zoroastrian fire temple.
- Golestan Palace in Tehran.

## Rates include

- Five nights aboard the Persian Explorer private train.
- Six nights of first-class hotel accommodations.
- All meals as per itinerary, plus caviar tasting and two feature meals.
- Porter service at all train stations.
- All transfers in modern, air-conditioned buses.
- Excursions detailed in the itinerary including entry fees.
- A Lernidee tour director throughout the journey.
- Local English-speaking guides for a maximum of 28 guests.
- An on board doctor.
- Traditional welcoming ceremonies at the Doab and Sa'adat Shahr stations.
- A travel guidebook and extensive trip information.

## Not included

- Flights, visa fees, tips and gratuities.

## Entry requirements

- Passport.
- A visa is necessary. Please check with your local embassy.
- No immunizations are required.

## Dates & Prices

13 Apr - 24 Apr 2017

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<b>Cat. Habibi</b>	<b>4,070 US-\$ bookable</b> 550 US-\$ Single supplement hotel 1,000 US-\$ Supplement for use of the compartment by 3 persons
<b>Cat. Ali Baba</b>	<b>5,880 US-\$ bookable</b> 2,150 US-\$ Single use supplement in compartment + hotel
<b>Cat. Aladdin</b>	<b>6,160 US-\$ bookable</b> 2,500 US-\$ Single use supplement in compartment + hotel
<b>Cat. Kalif</b>	<b>12,200 US-\$ bookable</b> 5,450 US-\$ Single use supplement in compartment + hotel

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19 Oct - 30 Oct 2017

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Price and Availability as of: 2016-11-22