



Join me as we journey to the cultural heart of historical Persia, enjoying untold Iranian hospitality as we go.

- Tour Escort, Sue Verrall

Solo Travellers Club

Iran Uncovered

Escorted tour with Sue Verrall



Your tour highlights:

- Witness Isfahan's visual feast of architecture and Persian gardens
- Visit UNESCO Heritage-listed Naqsh-e Jahan Square and Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque
- Wander Abyaneh's ancient village of twisting lanes and red brick houses
- Meet the locals in the labyrinth of the Isfahan Bazaar
- Prepare and enjoy a four-course meal of local cuisine
- Visit historical and enchanting Yazd
- Be dazzled by the whirling colours of the "Pink Mosque"

19 day Escorted Tour 10-28 September, 2019

A rich legacy recorded over three millennia makes Iran one of the most fascinating and diverse destinations in the world today. Persepolis and Isfahan are bursting with impressive architecture, elegant mosques and graceful palaces. Tree-lined boulevards, picturesque bridges and exotic bazaars are sure to delight, but it's the gregarious, and generously kind, people of this unconventional and deeply surprising country that are guaranteed to make a lasting impression.

Designed to provide an insight into the lives of local Iranian women, balancing staunch traditionalism with modern sensibility, this female-only escorted tour immerses you in their warm hospitality and friendly culture, against a backdrop of centuries-old history and architecture.

Sue has a great deal of experience as a tour escort and is excited to show you the culture of this exotic land. Having escorted many tours, Sue understands the peculiarities of travel and her extensive knowledge means support is at hand throughout your journey. Discover Travel is proud to be working with Sue to bring you this incredible experience.

Expression of interest is high

This tour is limited to 15 participants and initial interest has been exceptional. To secure your place on this exclusively female-only tour we require \$1,500 deposit and a completed booking form.

Meet your fellow travellers

Meet Sue and your fellow travellers at our social evenings held prior to departure and receive detailed tour information, as well as hints and tips for your travels.



Experience. The Difference.



Your Tour Itinerary

10 Sep Christchurch - Dubai

Depart early evening, we travel via Sydney and arrive into Dubai the following morning.

11 Sep Dubai - Abu Dhabi

Upon early arrival in Dubai, transfer by road to your Abu Dhabi hotel for early check-in. Your day is free to relax. Meet this evening for a Welcome Dinner and a chance to get to know your fellow Solo Travellers. (D)



12 Sep Abu Dhabi

After breakfast, we head out for a half-day tour of the Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque. With its white marble exterior and intricately studded pillars, dazzling with semi-precious stones, this architectural work of art is an impressive welcome to the city. (B, D)

13 Sep Abu Dhabi

Today we depart for a tour of the Louvre Abu Dhabi Museum. Bringing new cultures together, this museum champions the achievements of mankind from pre-history to present day, showcasing the unique collaboration between French design and Arabic heritage. (B, D)

14 Sep Abu Dhabi - Dubai - Shiraz

Depart your hotel early for your transfer to the Dubai Airport to meet your flight to Shiraz. On arrival at Shiraz International Airport, you will be met by a local representative and transferred to your hotel. (B, D)

15 Sep Shiraz - Persepolis - Shiraz

Early this morning, we visit a local bakery to taste some freshly baked bread before driving to Persepolis, one of the highlights of any visit to Iran.

The magnificent ruins of Persepolis lie roughly 650 km south of the capital, Tehran. Founded by Darius I in 518 BC, this palace complex, cut into an irregular and rocky mountainside, was inspired by Mesopotamian models and is symbolic of the Achaemenid dynasty. Persepolis was the example par excellence of a dynastic city, which is why it was burned by the Greeks of Alexander the Great in 330 BC. What remains today is the immense stone terrace, backed against the mountains of this UNESCO World Heritage site. Later, we head to the Shah Cheragh mosque and funerary monument to discover the female-only section of the mosque, before returning to Shiraz. (B, D)

16 Sep Shiraz - Isfahan

This morning we leave Shiraz and travel by local VIP bus to Isfahan, a journey of roughly 6 hours. On arrival in the afternoon, we'll head to our hotel to check-in.

Isfahan is Iran's number-one tourist destination for good reason. Its profusion of tree-lined boulevards, Persian gardens and important Islamic buildings gives it a visual appeal unmatched by any other Iranian city, and the many artisans working here underpin its reputation as a living museum of traditional culture.

Later, soak up the atmosphere with a walk along the Zayandeh River. Many historic bridges span the riverbed, and are a favourite gathering place for friends and family to catch up at the end of a workday. (B, D)

17 Sep Isfahan

Today, your guide will introduce you to Isfahan, one of Iran's most beautiful cities. This masterpiece of Persian culture features many UNESCO World Heritage listed sites.

We'll explore Naghsh-e Jahan, one of the world's largest public urban squares, located in the



centre of Isfahan. This outstanding example of Iranian and Islamic architecture was built in the early 17th century, and is bordered by two storey arcades and anchored on each side by four magnificent buildings – the Sheikh Lotfallah Mosque; pavilion of Ali Qapu; the celebrated Royal Mosque and the portico of Qeysariyeh. Here you'll also find the Bazaar of Isfahan, also dating back to the 17th century, its labyrinth of streets linking the old city with the new. During our tour, we'll also see the Chehel Sotun Palace, Imam Square & Mosque, and the Jameh Mosque of Isfahan and spend time wandering through the maze of alleys of the bazaar, observing artisans at work, browsing through the vast selection of scarves and perhaps doing a bit of shopping. Our day ends when we visit one of the many teahouses. Bursting with character and atmosphere, we'll do as locals do and enjoy a classic Iranian 'afternoon tea' - drinking yoghurt or tea and goshfil, the local cookie. (B, D)





18 Sep Isfahan - Kashan - Matin Abad

This morning we depart for a 4-hour drive to Matin Abad, stopping at Abyaneh village en-route.

Located at the foot of the Karkas Mountains, this muddle of narrow and sloping lanes and crumbling mud-brick houses with lattice windows and fragile wooden balconies, was founded by followers of the Zoroastrian religion fleeing an Arab invasion and forced conversion to Islam. This picturesque village is a living museum, preserving tradition and heritage, despite centuries of changing rules, dynasties and kingdoms.

Next, we head to Kashan, once famous for its textiles, pottery and tiles, is more widely known for its production of rose water. A delightful oasis city on the edge of a large desert in the middle of the Iranian plateau, it's here we'll enjoy respite from the desert heat and visit historical Fin Garden. The oldest garden in existence in Iran, completed in 1590, this combination of natural elements and man-made structures offers cool tranquillity and lush vegetation in otherwise arid surrounds.

We'll also visit Borujerdi House, built in 1857 for the wife of a wealthy merchant, over a period of 18 years by 150 craftsmen using simple equipment and basic materials, is a treasured example of why one shouldn't judge a book by its cover!

A stop will also be made at Agha Bozorg Mosque,

described at the "finest Islamic complex in Kashan and one of the best of the mid-19th century", before continuing our journey to Matin Abad Desert Camp, a unique eco-tourism adventure in the heart of the desert, for our overnight stay. The main camp building resembles a traditional Iranian house; we'll stay in traditional Iranian-style huts, indulge in organic food produced on-site and enjoy the charm of the desert - in comfort. (B, D)

19 Sep Matin Abad - Tehran

This morning we leave the desert and travel to Tehran by public VIP bus, a journey of 4 hours.

After check-in, head back out into the city with your guide to experience a local yoga studio. The increase in popularity of yoga has mirrored the gradual easing of social restrictions in Iran. There are hundreds of yoga studios throughout the country, and many of them are based here. All classes are segregated by gender, teachers included. You'll visit a women-only studio where women exchange their hijab for athletic wear, and where you'll have the opportunity to participate in the class alongside the local women of Tehran.

Later, your guide will accompany on the women's-only section of the local metro to travel around the city, and head through the streets of Tehran to see some of the more fashionable shopping areas that local women frequent. To finish off the night, perhaps stop off in a coffeehouse and compare the café culture of the capital to what you've already seen in Shiraz. (B, D)

20 Sep Tehran - Yazd

Start the day with a visit to the famous Tajrish markets in one of the oldest parts of the city. We'll visit the fruit, vegetable and spice sections of the market and learn how to combine these in the kitchen. Using seasonal ingredients, we'll cook a wonderful four-course meal, drink the local specialty of rose water or yoghurt, and enjoy conversation with local women around the table, while enjoying eating what we've produced. After



our leisurely lunch, we'll head back to the hotel to relax before tonight's overnight 8-hour train journey, boarding the women-only compartment of the train. On-board a snack will be served for dinner, a light end to the day after our delicious long lunch. (B, L, D)

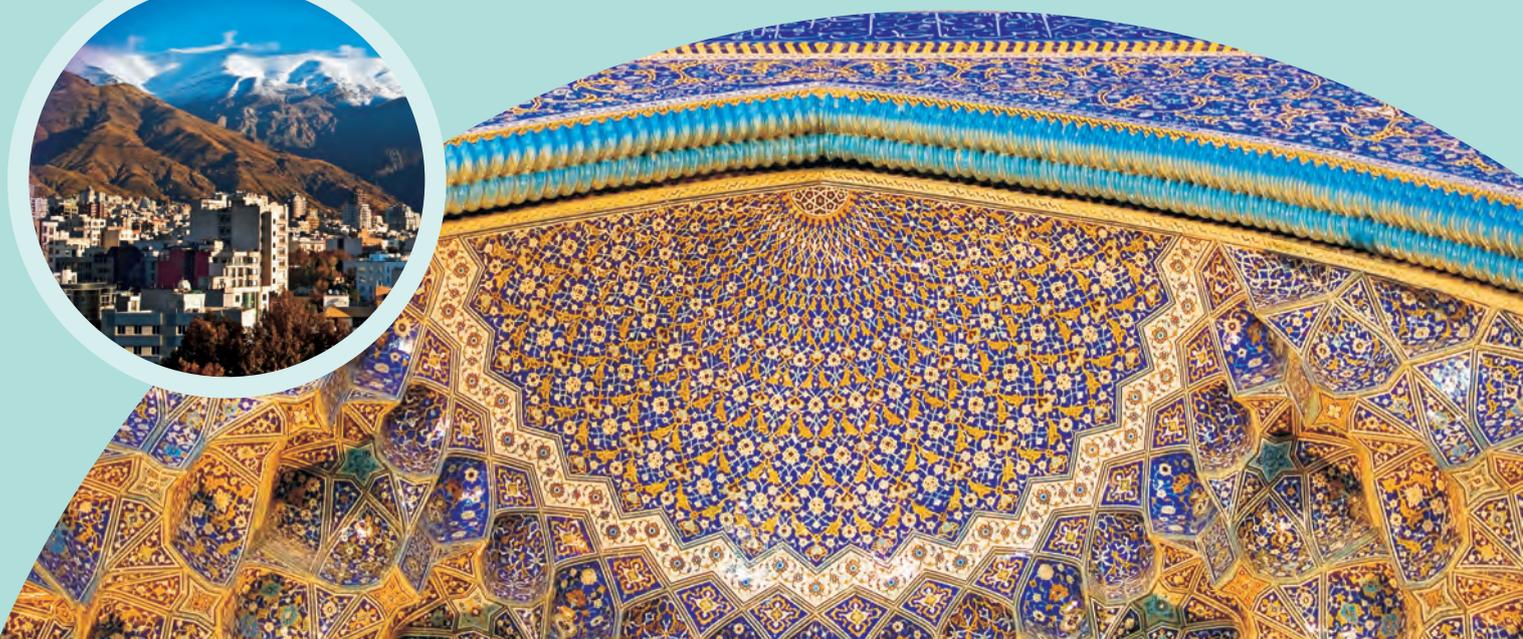
21 Sep Yazd

Our tour of this fascinating old city begins at Yazd Jameh Mosque, which dates to the 14th century. This fine example of Azari Persian architecture is crowned with a magnificent dome and decorated with turquoise and white geometric tiles. The mosque's pair of minarets are the highest in Iran. On the outskirts of Yazd, we'll visit a "Tower of Silence" (dakhma), a hilltop tower with cylindrical walls, where the Zoroastrians brought corpses for vultures to devour as a funeral formality. You may even catch sight of a flame that has been burning continuously since 470, at the window to the entrance hall of the Atashkadeh Fire Temple.

Yazd is also famous for its qanats (underground aqueducts) and a stop will also be made at its Water Museum. After your tour, we return to the hotel and enjoy the rest of the afternoon at leisure. (B, D)

22 Sep Yazd

Today you have the choice to be active, exploring nearby attractions or simply relax. Enjoy the views, take a dip in the pool, or perhaps utilise the sauna.





Tour price from \$10,795

per person single occupancy*

Price includes:

- Emirates Economy class return airfares from Christchurch

ABU DHABI:

- 5 star hotel including breakfast daily
- Airport transfers in air-conditioned vehicle
- 3 dinners at the hotel/restaurant
- Louvre Museum Visit with guide
- Abu Dhabi City Tour with Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque visit
- All tours and transfers on private basis

IRAN:

- 3-3.5 star accommodation & hotels
- Meals as specified (B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, D=Dinner)
- Professional English-speaking female local guides
- Gratuities/tipping in restaurants/hotels
- Entrance fees to sites mentioned in itinerary
- Transfers by 30-seater private air-conditioned bus
- Sightseeing as specified within the itinerary
- Train from Tehran to Yazd
- Iranian visa

Not included: Travel Insurance (compulsory), meals and drinks (unless specified on the itinerary), airport portage and items of a personal nature.

To secure your place: Send your \$1,500 non-refundable deposit per person with completed Booking Form to Discover Travel.

For more details and to book:

Phone: 03 364 3400 or 0800 747 737
Email: ideas@discovertravel.co.nz
Mail: PO Box 2477, Christchurch.

Discover Travel

New Zealand owned and operated, Discover Travel is a premier boutique travel agency within the House of Travel Group. We aim to experience the world through your eyes and passionately share our knowledge of the destination with you. Our goal is to genuinely connect you with the location and its culture. Consequently, we like to think that our clients come home with the stories that everyone else misses.

Your Tour Itinerary (continued)

Tonight we will learn how to make Gheimeh Yazdi, one of the most popular home-cooked dishes in Iran. This stew is a hearty mix of tomatoes, chickpeas, meat, onion and dried lime and makes for a wonderfully authentic, traditional dinner to end our day. (B, D)

23 Sep Yazd - Eghlid - Yasuj

This morning we leave Yazd and journey to Yasuj via the town of Eghlid. En-route we'll stop in Abarkuh to see an impressively ancient cypress tree, estimated to be between 4,000 and 5,000 years old. It was of great importance in ancient Iran as well as Zoroastrianism, and today is protected as a national natural monument. Located between the Zagros mountain range and the desert, lies Eghlid, once the preferred route to Persepolis. We will explore the local shrine and 'Tower of Silence', another vestige of the city's Zoroastrian heritage, before continuing to Yasuj to check-in to our hotel. Given its nearby forests and waterfalls, as well as its proximity to the Zagros Mountains and famous Mount Dena, Yasuj is often referred to as the 'nature capital' of Iran. (B, D)

24 Sep Yasuj - Kahkaran Village - Shiraz

This morning we travel for roughly 4 hours to Shiraz. Along the way we will stop in the village of Kahkaran to learn more about the local traditions of the nomadic people of the area. There are estimated to be around 1.5 million nomads living in Iran today, although the figure is gradually decreasing. In nomadic life the whole family matters; everyone has many duties to accomplish. After spending time with our hosts, gaining an insight into their lifestyles, we return to Shiraz,

known as the poetic capital of Persia. (B, D)

25 Sep Shiraz

This morning we'll visit Nasir-ol-Molk Mosque, also known as the Pink Mosque due to the considerable number of pink coloured tiles used in the interior and façade of the building. The morning hours are best to see the light streaming through the stained glass, highlighting why the mosque is also sometimes referred to as the 'rainbow' or 'kaleidoscope' mosque.

In the afternoon, we visit an Iranian hair salon, an environment exclusively for women and the hijab is removed. Perhaps opt for a manicure, or try a new hair style and enjoy a bit of time to relax with your choice of treatment, while talking to the women in the salon about their lives and lifestyles.

Later, we'll stop by the supermarket to buy ingredients for dinner, before heading to a local home for the evening. Here, we enjoy a farewell home cooked meal before returning to our hotel for the night. (B, D)

26 Sep Shiraz - Dubai

Check-out after breakfast and transfer to the airport to meet your flight to Dubai, arriving early afternoon.

Check-in to your transit hotel. (B)

27 Sep Depart Dubai

After breakfast, we fly home via Sydney.

28 Sep Christchurch

Our flight arrives in to Christchurch early afternoon, where our tour concludes.

***CONDITIONS: Price** - The price of \$10,795 per person is based on single room occupancy. **Land only** - Should you wish to extend your stay, please talk to us, we are happy to provide a land only price and airfare and pre/post tour arrangements. **Business Class Supplement** available on request. Please check with Discover Travel. **Payments** - The price quoted is for payment by cash, cheque or direct bank transfer. Cheques: Should be made payable to 'Discover Travel'. Our postal address is PO Box 2477, Christchurch. **Bank Transfer:** 06 0801 0495605 02 - Discover Travel Worldwide Ltd, using your name as a reference. **VISA or Mastercard** payments will incur a 2% convenience fee and American Express a 3% fee. **Deposit:** In order to confirm your booking, a non-refundable deposit of \$1,500 per person is required. Final payment will be due no later than 10 May 2019. Prices are based on a minimum group size of 15 (Maximum 15). Should the group size be less than 15, a small group surcharge will be applied.