

# IRAN

A historical  
roundtrip to all  
major sites in Iran

November 2019



...13 years since last visit

The flights were all more or less on time, however we still arrived in the middle of the night to Teheran where we had to pay Insurance coverage 14 € / person and 75€ for the e-visa. There was a queue of foreigners so this took a while. We were picked up by our Teheran guide and were brought to our hotel and were only in bed by 06:00 AM quite exhausted. We got to sleep a couple of hours before being picked up for a guided tour around Teheran on the Saturday. Breakfast in the hotels is nothing like what one I used to in the western world. That's for sure.

We started off by visiting the former US embassy where they had just changed the mural paintings outside over the last couple of days. They were now preparing a gathering for special invitees and had subsequently closed the interior museum for a couple of days.



## ...Teheran



We then continued to visit the **Golestan Palace** with all the splendid interior decorations and ceramic and tiles decorated exteriors. A visit to the Teheran Bazaar then followed where we strolled around to have a look at all the things for sale. We took lunch at a **traditional Persian restaurant – Farhangasil** – where we had various kebab dishes with plain and flavored yoghurts to go with the bread. We drank non-alcoholic apple flavored beer which tasted more like cider.

**The Central Bank of Iran** is also housing the magnificent **Jewelry Museum** which must be the most impressive such museum in the world. It also houses the world-famous **Koo-i-noor diamond**. After this we continued to the Azadi Tower and then finally the domestic airport for our flight connection to Shiraz.







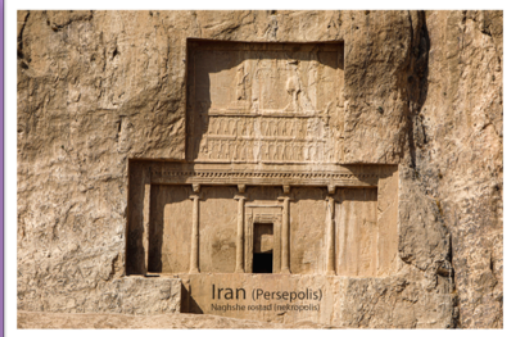
## Visiting Shiraz in the centre of Iran

Flight went on time from Teheran and we were picked-up in Shiraz by our guide Hamed Haratian who bode us welcome and brought us to our hotel Zandieyh in the center of town. We took dinner at the traditional restaurant of the hotel. The food was OK, but the service left a bit to be desired. There were many sights to visit during our three nights in Shiraz in total. We familiarized us with the city center quickly, which made it easier for us in the evening, when we had time to ourselves without the guide to get around. We visited the famous Mosque – Nasir al-Mulk, where the amazing multi-colored windows are. Here one should visit in the morning when the light hits the windows. Outside on a small street we stopped and visited a lovely small café to take coffee and tea (Joulep Café).

We then continued to visit the Mansion of Zinat al-Mulk – also very impressive. We strolled through the lovely old Bazaar (Vakil Bazaar) area and took lunch at a nice restaurant – Saray-e Mehr. We took our dinners at the Vakil plaza, where it was still possible to sit outdoors, although getting a bit chilly later on (Blankets were provided for). Lovely view overlooking the Vakil Mosque and all the people strolling around. During the stay we also visited places like the Khan Madrassa (Kouran school), the Citadel Karim Khan e-Zand, Ali Ibn Hamezh shrine, the tomb of the famous poet – Hafez, and other places.



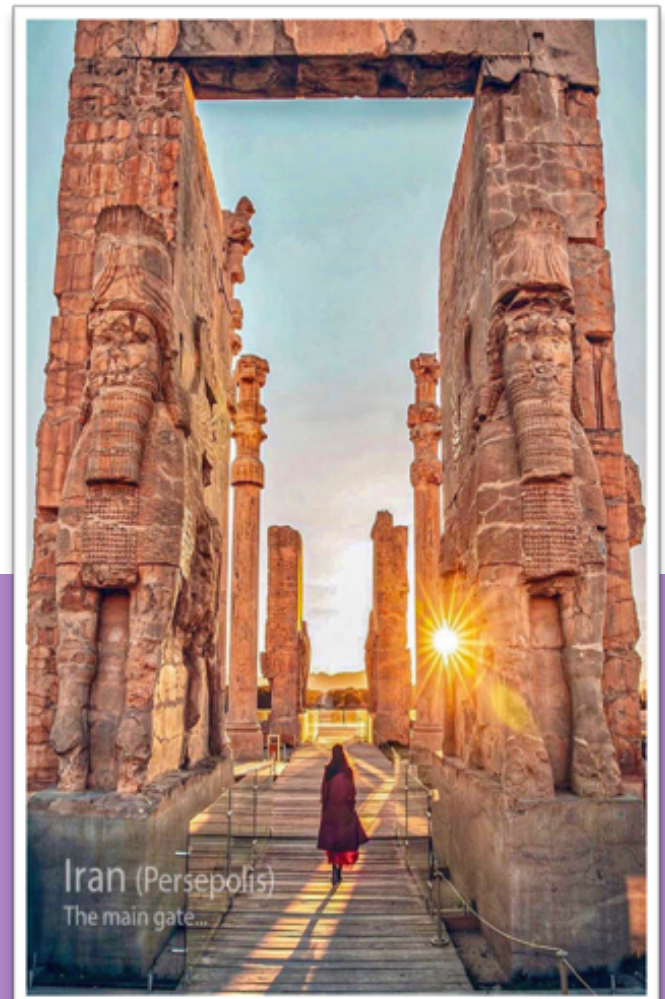




## Persepolis and Naqsh e-rostam

From Shiraz we made a daytrip out to **Persepolis and Naqsh e-Rostam (Nekropolis)**. This was to be one of the highlights of the trip of course. We also timed it so that we could spend the late afternoon at Persepolis and hopefully see the sunset there. Our first stop was the necropolis some 20 km from Persepolis. This was very interesting and nice to have visited. We then continued to Persepolis after having taken lunch at a very kitschy restaurant just near the site.

Again, the expectations were high. However, the weather changed during the afternoon and we had gloomy clouds and strong winds with sand coming in to Persepolis. We did therefore not have a chance to take the pictures, which I had anticipated. In addition, I must confess – the sight was not quite as spectacular as I had hoped. This to be compared to other great archeological sites which I have visited such as; Leptis Magna (Libya), Baalbek and Byblos (Lebanon) Palmyra (Syria) etc. etc.



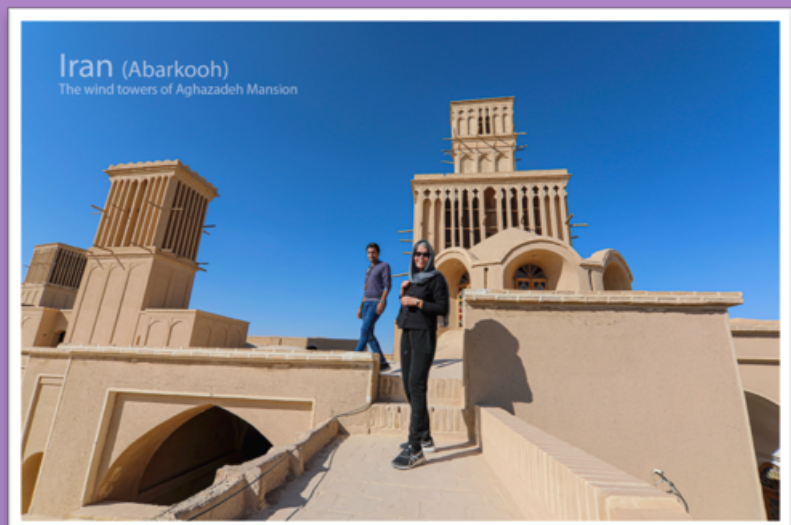




## The tomb of Cyrus the great

From Shiraz we continued some 440 km east towards the ancient city of Yazd. On the way we had two main sights to stop and visit. The first one being the tomb of Cyrus at Pasargad. The Ayatollahs and Mulla's has repeatedly been trying to destroy this tomb, but the people have intervened and stopped all these efforts over time. No, it seems the site is secured and also a main site for visitors from all over. The authorities are however careful and close it down in connection to demonstrations etc. not wanting this to become a place where people gather and take the opportunity to launch anti-government demonstrations. We enjoyed the short stop and then continued to Abarkooh.

Abarkooh has an old "Ice-storage house" build like a cone. This was used in the ancient times for storage of ice then distributed to the people. After this stop we went on to visit an old mansion – the Aghazadeh Mansion. This absolutely magnificent old merchant house from 19<sup>th</sup> century has been beautifully restored and is now a museum. We also took lunch here. The house has a number of "wind-cooling systems". These tall structures are cleverly constructed to catch the wind and channel it down into the houses to cool down.

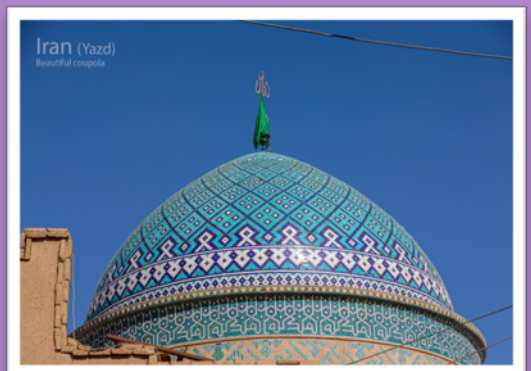




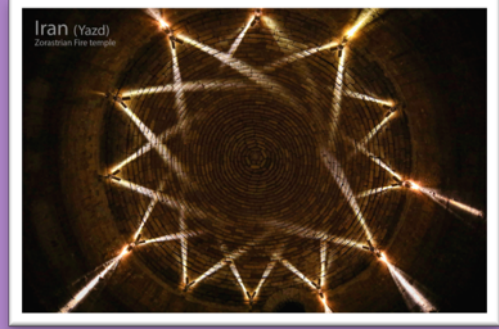
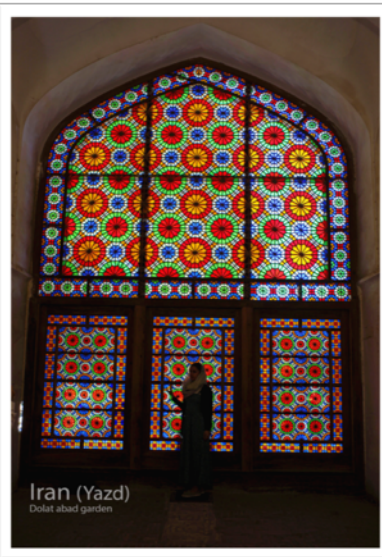


## YAZD – a UNESCO world heritage (I)

After our long journey from Shiraz we arrived quite late into the old Medinah of Yazd. Hamed, our guide, had changed our earlier booked hotel – the Moshir al-mamalek Garden, to Shah Abol Ghazem boutique hotel smack in the center of the old town. He thought this would be more convenient for us, as we then could walk around to all the main sites. This was of course correct, however, the so-called boutique hotel was not quite up to standard, as we had expected. Yes, it was an old converted merchant mansion very beautiful indeed with in outdoor place in the center of the covered house. It also had a marvelous view overlooking the old medina of Yazd. The problem we felt was that it was extremely noisy with paper-thin walls. All the sounds could be heard as if you were sleeping in the street. Apart from this, we enjoyed the ancient city of Yazd.

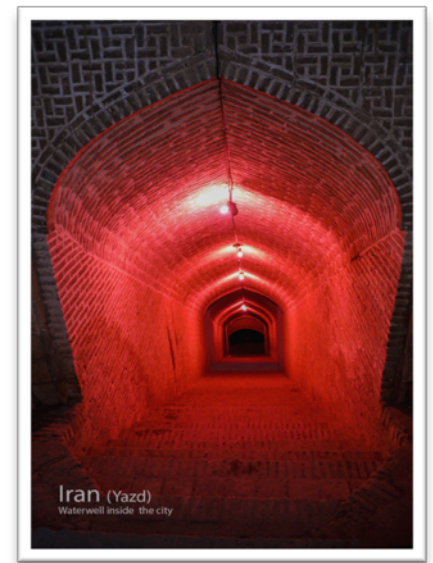






## Zoroastrian Fire temple in Yazd (II)

We started off by visiting the Zoroastrian Fire temple. A holy site and the only Fire temple in Iran, for the Zoroastrians to visit. In India there are eight such temples, as the Zoroastrians had to flee to India with their religion many years ago. We also went out to visit the old burial site of the Zoroastrians on the outskirts of Yazd. Here they used to bury the dead, on top of a mountain out in the open. This was forbidden back in the 1930s when they had to change this routine and bury them underground. This holy site and "Tower of silence" as it is called can still be visited however. We also got to visit a Henna production site. Very interesting to see how the grind and pack Henna. In the old medina we visited of course the Bazaar area, the Jameh mosque the huge Amir Chahmaq mosque and the lovely Garden of Dowlat Abad. Hamed, our guide, had also arranged for us to visit a traditional performance of the old sport called Zoorkhaneh (hum). The restaurants and cafés we visited included; Art Café, Fooka Café and a few more which I have forgotten the names of (they are all pretty much the same – offering Kebab and nothing more).







## Isfahan (I)

This time our journey to Isfahan was approximately 320 km. The road went via the smaller villages of Nai'n and Meybod. These ancient villages both housed old citadels as well as a Jame mosque (central mosque). The one in Nai'n was said to be one of the oldest in the country. In Meybod we also visited a restored Caravanserai. We arrived late afternoon to Isfahan and checked in to our hotel the old and famous Abbasi Hotel. Isfahan is also the hometown of our guide Hamed. We covered quite a bit of the city by walking. The main square Naqsh e Jahan is the second largest square in the world after the red square in Beijing. Around this square one finds many of the sites worth visiting such as; the Shah mosque, Sheikh Lotfollah mosque, the bazaar and the Ali Qapu Palace.







## Isfahan (II)

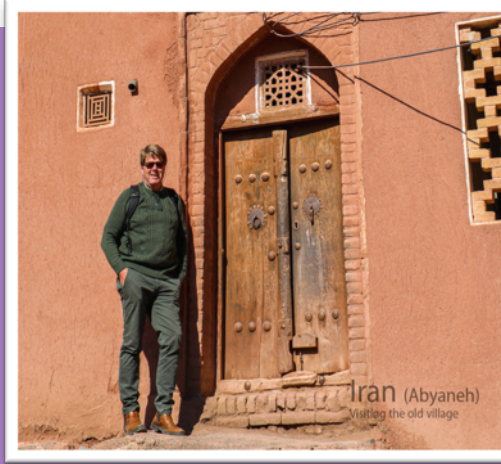
In addition to these sights we also visited the old **Armenian Vank Cathedral with its beautiful paintings inside**. There are a number of bridges over the river, and the most important and beautiful ones were **Si-o-se pol bridge and the Khaju bridge** – both which we visited during the day as well as at night. Restaurant visits included the lovely **Namakdan Mansion restaurant (rebuilt old mansion)** and the famous but **not so nice - Shahrzad restaurant**. **Roozegar Café in the old bazaar** area is worth a stop. This is the oldest café in Isfahan.







Iran (Abyaneh)  
Door to the old mosque



Iran (Abyaneh)  
Visiting the old village



Iran (Abyaneh)  
Village woman

# Abyaneyh

Leaving Isfahan, we headed for Kashan with a stop on the way up in the mountains. The old **red-brick village of Abyaneh** was our target. Here, life hasn't changed much over the years, apart from the fact that most of the young people have left as there are no jobs to be had anymore. Tourists come here to see the old village built on the mountainside and its people who dress differently and also speaks with their own language.



Iran (Abyaneh)  
old village lady up in the mountains



Iran (Abyaneh)  
Local woman in the village



Iran (Abyaneh)  
Villager up in the mountains

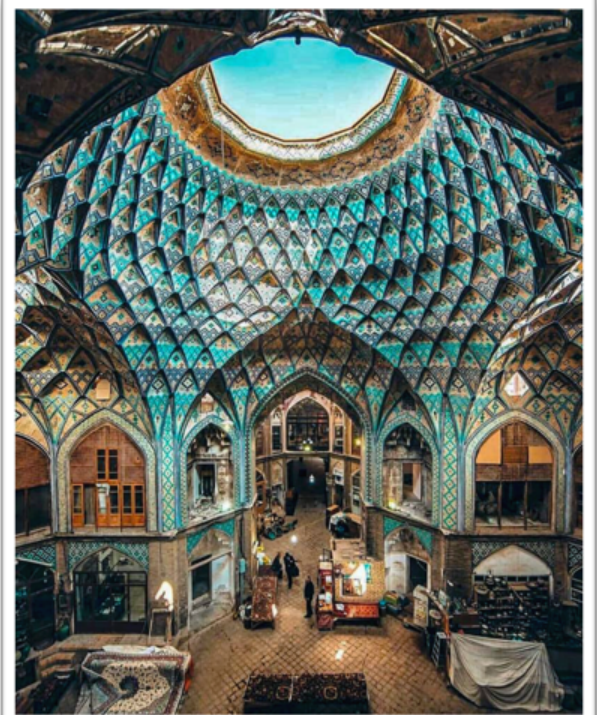


## Iran (Kashan)



# Kashan

We arrived into Kashan in the late afternoon and had a stroll around the old medina and visited the sites such as; **Tabatabaei Mansion** – yet another old merchant house, the bazaar area and then checked-in to our lovely hotel – the **Saraye Ameriah Boutique hotel**. Possibly the best of all the hotels we stayed at during our visit to Iran. This was yet again an old merchant mansion restored and rebuilt into a boutique hotel. The room with the view and cupola roof was really amazing. We also made a stop at the lovely **Bagh e Fin Garden** on the outskirts of Kashan. We took lunch at Rose House restaurant & hotel. The bazaar in Kashan was possibly the most beautiful of all the bazaars we visited in Iran.







## The holy city of Qom

...On our very last day we stopped in the holy city of Qom on our way to the airport in Teheran. This is a strange place to visit and very religious. **This is the holiest place of Shiite Muslims.** In order to enter the sacred area, you have to pass a scan. Women also have to cover up more than is customary outside. A Chadeaux covering all except the face is compulsory prior to entering. **Here hundreds and hundreds of mullahs are milling around.** They are teaching classes and are being taught themselves. We were assigned a Mulla to guide us around the holy mosques and shrines inside. **The most famous site is the mausoleum of Fatimah** – the daughter of the Prophet Mohammed.

