

DISCOVER THE WONDERS
SPIEKERMANN
TRAVEL  SERVICE



**ANCIENT
AND MODERN IRAN**

Jewels of Persia

May 05 to 22, 2022

Led by Professor Miklos Sarkozy, Historian, and Associate Professor of Iranian and Middle Eastern Studies at the Karoli University of Budapest, Hungary

Can be combined with our South Caucasus tour (April 14 to May 01, 2022)

Iran is home to a breathless mix of spectacular madrassas, exquisite mosques and some of the most wonderful examples of Islamic architecture in the world. Everywhere you look, the magnificence of 2,500 years of history lies all around you. Ancient Persia has been the seat of many civilizations and unique contributions in poetry, art, architecture, science and history. Many of Iran's achievers have contributed to our modern world. Most of the country's archaeological gems are well preserved and portray a rich historical heritage. Your tour will not only explore ancient ruins and colorful cities but also exotic bazaars and old baths. Marvel at ancient monuments and beautifully tiled mosques. Stroll through medieval bazaars that remain much as they were centuries ago. Stop to visit local nomadic tribes when driving across the vast country. Your journey will take you to Yazd the center of Zoroastrian culture, to Shiraz city of poets which has had major Jewish and Christian communities and the UNESCO World Heritage sites of Isfahan, and Persepolis. Come and discover Iran, a repository of grand relics and ruins.

Ihab Zaki

Managing Director, Spiekermann Travel

Thursday, May 05 Arrive in Tehran (IRAN)



Upon arrival in Tehran (depending on your flight schedule), you'll be met by your guide and transfer to the hotel for check-in and overnight.

Note: Standard check in time at hotel on May 05 is 3:00 pm. if you arrive on May 04 or very early morning on May 05; an extra hotel night needs to be booked.

Friday, May 06 Tehran to Masuleh to Anzali



Today we will go to Anzali, stopping on route in Masuleh. See this beautiful 1,000 year-old village in the Mountains of the Alborz, protected by the Iranian Cultural Heritage and Tourism Organization. Have a leisurely walk through the multi-layered paths of the village, with its quaint shops, and perhaps enjoy some tea. Then relax on a scenic drive back to Anzali. Overnight at *Sepid Kenar hotel or similar*. **(B,L,D)**

Saturday, May 07 Anzali to Tabriz



We leave the Caspian Sea to Tabriz, with a visit to Ardabil to see one of Iran's precious jewels, the **mausoleum and museum of the Shekh Safi -eddinn Ardabil**, the great Sufi Leader of the 14th century and the forefather of the Sufi inspired Safavid kings, and another **UNESCO World Heritage Site**. Visit includes the tomb of the Sheikh, the **tomb of Shah Isma'ail**, the Founder of the Safavid Dynasty, and the 'Chini-Khaneh' (China House), where the famous collection of Chinese blue and white porcelain, ordered by Shah Abbas for his ancestor's tomb, is on display. Late afternoon we'll continue to Tabriz. Upon arrival, check in to our hotel for short rest and dinner. **(B,L,D)**

Sunday, May 08 Tabriz



In the morning we'll have a chance to stroll to the Safavid summer residence of Shah Goli, a short walk from the hotel. Tabriz was the capital of the Safavid dynasty until the end of the 16th Century, when it was moved to Isfahan. There, as you will learn, half the world was to be found in the huge square, **Naqsh-e Jahan**. The other half was in Tabriz. Research has shown that this area, today rich in the production of nuts and fruits, might have been the site of the Garden of Eden. First we'll see the **Blue Mosque** built by Shah Jahan in 1465, the small exquisite Azerbaijan Museum, and the Citadel. We will also stop by **old Tabriz Bazaar** which is a UNESCO site. This afternoon we have tour of Kandovan volcanic village in Osku of the Eastern Azerbaijan Province. There we find man-made cliff dwellings, which are still inhabited. Return to your hotel for overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Monday, May 09 Tabriz to Zanjan



Morning we will leave Tabriz to Zanjan, en the route we will visit the archaeological site of **Takht-e-Soleiman** which is situated in a valley set in a volcanic mountain region. The site includes the principal **Zoroastrian sanctuary** partly rebuilt in the Ilkhanid (Mongol) period as well as a temple of the Sasanian period dedicated to Anahita. The site has important symbolic significance. The designs of the fire temple, the palace and the general layout have strongly influenced the development of Islamic architecture. We will continue our route to Zanjan and upon arrival check in the *Zanjan Grand hotel* or similar. **(B,L,D)**

Tuesday, May 10 Zanjan to Tehran



Before leaving Zanjan we will move to see a **historical public bath**. Then we leave Zanjan to Tehran. En route visit the magnificent 14th century **Gonbad-eSoltaniyeh**, the tomb/tower of Olijaytu, the last Mongol/Il-Khanid Ruler of Iran (1304-1330).The monument is remarkable in many different architectural aspects, including its huge dome, which is about 167 feet high and ranks amongst the largest domes in the world. **Gonbad-e-Soltaniyeh** is one of 13 UNESCO World Heritage sites in Iran. Finally check in to *Espinaz Hotel/Azadi Hotel or similar* for dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Wednesday, May 11 Tehran



This sprawling city became Iran's capital in the 18th century under Agha Mohammad Khan, the founder of the Qajar Dynasty. Tehran (meaning warm slope) is located south of the impressive snow-capped Alborz Mountains and the city is known for its large museums, art centers and palaces. We begin with visiting **Golestan Palace** - a masterpiece of the Qajar era and a **UNESCO site**. Then we proceed to see the National Archaeological Museum, the country's foremost museum established in 1937. See a stone capital of a winged lion from Susa and the sixth century BC audience hall relief of Darius the Great from the Treasury at Persepolis. We are then guided through the **Glass and Ceramics Museum**, which was once an extraordinarily beautiful private residence during the Qajar period, and later was used as the Egyptian Embassy. Here we can find glass and ceramic artifacts dating back to the second and first millennia BC. We return to the hotel for dinner. **(B,L,D)**

Thursday, May 12 Tehran



Today we have a full-day tour of Tehran. Our first stop will be the **Saadabad Palace Complex**, which was founded under the Qajar Kings in the 19th century. Then move to **Tajrish Bazaar** and enjoy shopping. Quaint passageways rebuilt from hundreds of

years ago which are home to merchants of every kind of food, clothes, gold and silver jewelry, religious artifacts, artwork and household goods, all next to each other, in no particular order, lit by a combination of incandescent and daylight sneaking in through the roof. Finally move to visit the **Carpet Museum** with its beautiful modern architecture and a façade resembling a carpet-weaving loom. We will have dinner at the Espinas Hotel and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Friday, May 13 Tehran to Isfahan



Today we enjoy a leisurely coach ride from Tehran to Isfahan. En route we stop in Kashan to see the historical **garden of Fin**, which was first planted during the Safavid period and kept alive with water from the nearby Suleymaniye Spring/Qanat. The Zand and Qajar monarchs expanded this beautiful walled Persian Garden, with many open pavilions added. A museum on the site displays artifacts from nearby **Tepe Sialk**, which is one of the most important archaeological sites in Iran, dating back to 4000-5000 BC. We can also see some of the many restored merchant houses in Kashan such as the **Borujerdi and Taba-Tabai House**, with very fine examples of the "Badgirs" or wind-catchers. Further along the way we stop at the charming town of Natanz to visit a beautiful Islamic Complex of **Friday Mosque**, Monastery and **Tomb of Sheikh Abdol Samad Isfahani**. We will also enjoy a tea break under the shade and visit a nearby traditional **pottery workshop**. Isfahan (Esfahan) is perhaps the most beautiful of all Iranian cities. It is located 250 miles south of Tehran at an elevation of nearly a mile. Transfer to Abbasi/Kowsar Hotel or similar for Check in, dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Saturday, May 14 Isfahan



Today's full-day tour begins with a visit to **Chehel Sotoon Palace** (or Forty Pillars Palace) with its beautiful reflecting pool and **UNESCO** recognized Persian Gardens. Continue to the Armenian Quarter to visit the richly decorated **Vank Cathedral**. Begun in 1606 at the time of arrival of Armenian immigrants to Isfahan, it was completed between 1655 and 1664 under the supervision of Arch-bishop David, with the encouragement of the Safavid rulers. It is the historic focal point of the Armenian Christian Church in Iran. This afternoon visit a carpet workshop to see Iran's world-famous carpets as we sip tea and have the opportunity to purchase if interested! Return to our hotel for a short rest. Before dinner, we walk to a famous **Miniaturist's art gallery** to see how this world-renowned artwork is done. Dinner is at Shahrzad Restaurant this evening. Return to the hotel for overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Sunday, May 15 Isfahan



Enjoy a full-day tour of Isfahan. Begin by visiting the first of its two **UNESCO** sites - **Meidan Emam** to see the **Ali Qapu Palace**, **Sheikh Lotfollah** and **Royal Mosques**. Meidan Emam or Naghsh-e Jahan (literally image of the world) complex is the central focus of Isfahan. Its royal square measures 1674 feet by 540 feet and is enclosed by double storied arcades. It's unmatched in elegance and spaciousness anywhere in the world! On the north, side is the entrance to the **Royal Qaysariyyeh Bazaar**. On the east, side is the **Lotfollah Mosque**. Constructed between 1603 and 1617, it served as a private chapel for the Imperial family. You will see exquisite 17th

century Persian tile work on the domed ceiling. On the west, side is the **Ali Qapu Palace**. To the south is the Shah or Royal Mosque, dedicated to Shah Abbas the Great. To many it is considered the most beautiful mosque in the world! Lunch at the Bastani Restaurant. If construction in the area permits, we will visit the antique Friday Mosque, or Masjed-e Jame, Isfahan's second **UNESCO** Site. As it stands now, it is the result of continual construction, reconstruction, additions and renovations on the site from around 841 AD to the end of the twentieth century. Archaeological excavation has determined an Abbasid hypostyle mosque in place by the 10th century. Return to the hotel for dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Monday, May 16 Isfahan to Yazd



Depart early this morning for Yazd. While motoring in route from Isfahan, stop in Meybod to see the Ancient **Narin Qaleh** or castle, a 17th century Safavid caravanserai. This town is a jewel! See Zilo weaving, learn about the courier service dating back 2,500 years, see the **pigeon house**, and explore the oldest and largest **icehouse** dating from the Safavid era. Depending on our arrival time, we will have tour of **Old city of Yazd** which is a **UNESCO** World Heritage site and the magnificent Friday mosque of Yazd. Transfer to **Moshir Garden/Da'ad/Safaiyeh Hotel** for check in and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Tuesday, May 17 Yazd to Kerman



Today we enjoy a half-day tour of Yazd, which is dotted with badgers throughout to help cool this desert city naturally. It is the second oldest city in the world according to **UNESCO**, from an architectural viewpoint. We begin at the **Zoroastrian Fire Temple**. Continue to Towers of Silence a former Zoroastrian cemetery. While a majority of the population is Muslim, there is a large minority of both Jews and Zoroastrians. The religion is monotheistic and dualistic, and it influenced Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Zoroastrians revere fire as a symbol of God and keep eternal flames burning at their temples. See the **Water Museum** and learn about Qanats, an advanced technology system first developed about 1000 BC to bring mountain water through underground conduits to the plains. It rivals the Roman system of Aqueducts. Today there are about 22,000 qanats that provide 75% of Iran's fresh water. In the afternoon, our scenic 5-hour drive is through some beautiful pistachio orchards. Afterwards transfer to the **Pars Hotel** for check in and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Wednesday, May 18 Kerman



Today after breakfast, we have a half-day excursion to **Rayen** and **Mahan**. Drive up into the mountains to the town of Rayen and visit one of the oldest citadels in Iran. We continue to **Shahzadeh (Prince) Garden** and stroll through the beautiful garden with its waterfall cascades (late 19th century Qajar period garden/mansion). Lunch today will be in the garden. In the afternoon, we visit Mahan to see the **blue-tiled Mausoleum of Shah Nematollah-Vali**, the great 14th century Sufi leader. Then around 3 pm return to Kerman. Although it's Friday we can still pay a visit to the beautiful bazaar, Ganj Ali Khan wax museum, Old Mosque and theological school dating from the 17th century. Return to your hotel for overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Thursday, May 19
Kerman to Shiraz



Drive to Shiraz, the city of nightingales, historic monuments, poets and philosophers, warriors, kings and orchards. En-route visit the **Sassanian Palace at Sarvestan**, the 5th century AD structure is thought by many to be a hunting lodge or small palace built by Bahram V (420-440 AD). Continue to Shiraz passing through the majestic mountainous routes and seeing two large salt lakes on the way. Welcome to Shiraz, the present-day capital of the Fars Province, the heartland of Iran, which gave its name to the Persian language: Farsi. Shiraz is situated in a plain surrounded by two mountain ranges. The city is well known for its mild climate and friendly people. Afterwards transfer to the **Homa Hotel or similar** for check in and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Friday, May 20
Shiraz



Full day city tour of Shiraz. First we pay our respects at the **Garden and Tomb of the beloved poet Hafez**. Have your fortune read and make a wish! Visit some of the famous gardens of this "City of Roses and Nightingales", including Nasir-ol-Molk the pink-tiled 19th-century mosque and Qajar period **Narenjestan Garden/House** (or Qavam House) with its beautiful mirror work and elegant wooden features. We enjoy lunch at the famous Haft Khan Restaurant. Then move to visit **Vakil Bath** which includes **Arg of Karim Khan, Vakil Bazaar, Vakil Mosque** and many administrative buildings. Return to your hotel for overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Saturday, May 21
Shiraz to Persepolis to Pasargadae



Get ready for a truly wonderful day! After breakfast, we'll drive about 35 miles to **Takht-e Jamshid** or as the Greeks called it, Persepolis, a ruined capital of ancient Iran. We will explore the Gate of Xerxes, the Apadana Palace, the Treasury, the Harem and the private palaces of the different rulers. Xerxes and Artaxerxes I who ruled Persia in the 5th century BC completed Persepolis. Explore **Pasargadae**, the capital of Cyrus the Great and site of his simple but imposing tomb. Finally we visit **Naghsh-é-Rostam**, which contains the rock carved chambers of four Achaemenian tombs, believed to be those of Darius the Great, Xerxes, Artaxerxes and Darius II. The ornamental facades are rock reliefs from the Sassanian dynasty depicting various scenes of imperial conquests. Later, return to Shiraz via the **Quran Gate** and **Jahan Nama Seljuk Garden**. Return to your hotel for overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Sunday, May 22
Shiraz to US



Enjoy breakfast in the morning. Transfer to the airport for your flight back home or continue your next trip. End of service.

"We reserve the right to change the order of activities or places visited due to unforeseen schedule conflicts or in order to make the itinerary run smoothly"

Special Notes on Travel:

We will be covering great distances by road during this journey. The roads are very good and the air-conditioned bus very comfortable. You will often be served cold water, tea and fruits along the way. We will make several rest stops (some will not be five star bathrooms and others will be in the beautiful wilderness). It is important to recognize the exhausting nature of some of the long driving days as well as some of the site visits where you might have to walk on uneven terrain. By signing up for this tour, participants are acknowledging their full understanding and acceptance of all terms and conditions and are admitting that they are in good physical and mental health and are equipped with open mind, a sense of adventure, and a tolerant and patient spirit to cope with the tour.





About your Lecturer Miklos Sarkozy... About your Lecturer... Miklos Sarkozy is an associate professor of Iranian and Middle Eastern Studies at the Karoli University of Budapest, Hungary. A graduate of the State University of Budapest (with a Ph.D. in Iranian Studies), he is a renowned expert of Near Eastern history, religious studies, and archaeology of middle eastern cultures. He has studied in Tehran, Naples, and London (Institute of Ismaili Studies) as well. Dr Sárközy currently specializes in the history of Shi'i Islam of Iraq and Iran, Middle Eastern History, and lan-

guages. Dr. Sárközy has a keen interest in Middle Eastern languages and for many years he had studied ancient Middle Eastern languages written

in the cuneiform alphabet (namely Old Persian and Akkadian - the primary language of Mesopotamia before the Hellenistic period). His studies included classes of classical Arabic and Persian languages as well. Besides classes on Islamic history and Shi'i studies, he currently teaches ancient near Eastern history in Budapest, focusing on the history and architectural heritage of ancient Mesopotamia and Persia. He is fluent in Persian, English, Italian, German, Russian and Hungarian and has published many papers in several of those languages.

Tour Cost (Land only):

4-5 travelers : \$7,150.00

6-9 travelers: \$6,775.00

10-12 travelers: \$6,500.00

per person sharing in double occupancy

Single Supplement: \$ 950.00

Price based on group size minimum of 4 participants and maximum of 12 participant

Trip Grade: II Lodging Level: * _******

Tour includes:

- Arrival and departure transfers to/from airport.
- 17 nights at deluxe and first class properties in most cities & superior tourist class hotels in smaller towns with breakfast.
- Travel by modern comfortable & air-conditioned motor coach.
- Meals as specified in the itinerary.
- All Tours as per itinerary & entrance fees to the sites and museums mentioned.
- Escort of lecturer throughout the trip.
- English Speaking local guide.
- A bottle of water per passenger per day on touring days plus juice, coffee and tea on the bus
- Gratuities to guides, porters, drivers and hotel staff.

Tour does not include:

- International round airfare from USA
- Iran Visa (Currently obtainable from embassy in DC for **\$200.00 (Subject to change).**)
- Dayroom or extra hotel nights necessitated by airline flight schedule changes.
- Airport transfers if not arriving/departing on exact trip dates.
- Expenses of a personal nature such as: beverages with meals, telephone, camera fees, laundry, etc.
- Travel Insurance (**HIGHLY RECOMMENDED**)

Trip Grade:

II Active – Some hikes, slightly more demanding walks at or to sites, few elevations, comfortable but busy schedule and some long rides and extensive drives.

Lodging Level:

*****Superior:** Lodges and hotels with additional amenities, refined service and comfort level acceptable to western standards. (3 or 4 stars)

******Luxury:** Regular style- usually large- hotels, typical western standard with ample venues, and full amenities. (4 or 5 stars)

