

TRAVEL WITH FRIENDS IN 2012



Cobalt and Lustre: Treasures of Ancient Persia

5 – 27 November 2012 (23 days / 22 nights)

Tour Leader: John Tidmarsh


Renaissance
Tours


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Tour leader John Tidmarsh

BA Hons, MA, PhD

John Tidmarsh was previously tutor and then part-time Lecturer in the Department of Archaeology at the University of Sydney. He is currently President of the Near Eastern Archaeology Foundation of that University.

He is a Co-Director of the University of Sydney's excavations at Pella in Jordan and is also Co-Director of the ANU University of Melbourne excavations at Jebel Khalid in Syria.

His main areas of interest are the archaeology of Alexander the Great's conquests, the Hellenistic Period in the Near East and Asia, and the Islamic world.

He has led tours for the Art Gallery Society of NSW and other institutions to Oman, Syria, Jordan, Iran, Turkey and Greece. He travels widely in the Middle East.

Cobalt and Lustre: Treasures of Ancient Persia

Few countries can boast of such an illustrious past and diversity of cultures and peoples as Iran.

On this 28 day tour travel through marvellous mountain and desert landscapes and visit such architectural masterpieces as the awe-inspiring Achaemenid palaces and tombs of Persepolis, Susa, Pasargad and Naqsh-e Rostam.

Also enter the lesser known, but equally powerful, world of the Sassanians whose opulent palaces at Bishapur and Firuzabad, along with the remarkable religious centre of Takht-e Sulaiman, with its bottomless lake and great Fire Temple, represent some of the finest monuments seen in Iran today.

Explore the enchanting mud-brick city of Yazd, on the edge of the Dasht-e Kavir, with its brooding Zoroastrian Towers of Silence, narrow winding lanes, and opulent merchants' houses with their tall wind-towers. In Shiraz, 'the city of roses and nightingales', enter the enchanted world of Persian gardens and poetry through the wonderful gardens of the Bagh-e Eram, the Narenjastan Pavilion and the tombs of Hafez and Sa'adi.

Finally spend several days exploring the stunning parks and gardens, caravanserais, bazaars, and mosques of Safavid Isfahan, truly the "Pearl of Islam".



Golestan Palace, Tehran



Yazd

ITINERARY

Sun 4 November 2012

Depart Australia

Suggested departure from Australia on Emirates via Dubai to Teheran.

Mon 5 Nov

Arrive Teheran

Arrive Teheran in the morning. Transfer to the hotel located in the centre of Teheran.

In the afternoon visit the fabulous **State's Jewels Museum**, housed in the vaults of the Central Bank of Iran, displaying the most dazzling and priceless collection of jewels and gems in the world.

Tonight join John Tidmarsh and fellow art lovers for a welcome dinner. (D)

Tue 6 Nov

Teheran

Begin your exploration of Teheran with a visit to the **Archaeological Museum**, displaying an authentic collection of pottery, bronze and valuable pieces from millenniums BC until the Islamic era. Continue to the **Glass & Ceramics Museum** with a beautiful collection of glass and pottery from different periods. Finish with a visit to the **Reza Abbasi Museum** displaying objects from pre-historic era until 20th century; the two galleries of paintings and calligraphy in this museum show different schools of painting and calligraphy from various periods in Iran's history. (BL)

Wed 7 Nov

Teheran

After breakfast visit the **Golestan Palace and Museum Complex**, the former residence of the 19th and early 20th century Qajar Kings of Iran, with several museums including the **Marble Throne Room** and the **Ethnographic Museum**. Also visit the former residence of the former Royal Family of Iran at **Sa'ad-Abad Palace and Museum**.

Afternoon at leisure. We recommend a visit to the **Carpet Museum**, which has an excellent collection of Persian carpets from different regions of Iran on display. (BL)

Thu 8 Nov

Teheran - Zanjan

In the morning journey from Teheran to Zanjan via Qazvin. After lunch visit to the magnificent **Mausoleum of Uljaitu**, set like a gem in the formerly vast plain of Sultanieh, constructed during the reign of Sultan Muhammad Khoda Bande (1304-1330). The monument is remarkable, its huge dome is about 51 metres high and ranks amongst the largest

domes in the world. The stucco-work, the tile-work, and the designs decorating this monument are unique. (BLD)

Fri 9 Nov

Zanjan

Excursion to **Takht-e-Soleiman**, the 'Throne of Solomon', located in a remote mountain valley near Takab, one of the most interesting and enigmatic sacred sites in Iran. At the centre of a flat stone hill rising twenty metres above the surrounding lands, is a small lake of mysterious beauty. Brilliantly clear but dark as night due to its depth, the lake's waters are fed by a hidden spring far below the surface. Places like this were known in legendary times as portals to the underworld, as abodes of earth spirits.

The massive stone walls and remnants of the thirty eight watch towers, together with remains of the palaces, the fire temple and the Anahita temple, built around the lake mainly by the Sassanians in the 3rd century AD, are part of what is left of the complex. The crater of Zendan-e-Soleiman (the Prison of Solomon) can be glimpsed in the distance. (BLD)

Sat 10 Nov

Zanjan - Hamadan

Travel from Zanjan to Hamadan, the capital of the Median Empire in the 7th century BC, and the summer capital of the Achaemenid kings in the 5th century BC. The archaeological site of **Ecbatana**, or **Hegmataneh**, both ancient names for Hamadan, is a testimony to the ancient glory of this town.

Hamadan, the centre of the Province of Hamadan, is still an important city today with many sites to be visited, including the **Ganjnameh**, with inscriptions by Darius I and his son, Xerxes, carved on the rocks of the mountain. Also see the **Tomb of Esther & Mordecai**, a major Jewish pilgrimage centre; the 12th century **Alavyan Tomb Tower**; the Tomb of Avicenna (died in 1034) - Iran's celebrated philosopher/scientist/physician, whose prescriptions are still used by Western and Iranian medical universities; and finally the **Stone Lion**, an intriguing sole statute, believed to date from the Hellenistic Period when Alexander invaded Iran and was, supposedly, made to honour one of his slain generals. (BLD)

Sun 11 Nov

Hamadan

Morning excursion to **Tepe Nush-i-Jan**, an important archaeological site, located to the south of Hamadan. The site dates to the Median Period and is a superb example of a Median fort, palace and Fire-Temple. In the palace, see the precursor and architectural inspiration for the much-larger



Tower of Silence, Yazd



Vakil Bazaar, Shiraz



Friday Mosque, Yazd



Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque, Isfahan

Apadana at Persepolis. The most impressive site is a very well preserved Fire-Temple, which was deliberately filled to a depth of 6 metres with shale chips to protect its sanctity once the site was abandoned. As a result, this monument is one of the earliest and best-preserved Zoroastrian Fire-Temples in the whole of western Iran. Afternoon at leisure in Hamadan. (BL)

Mon 12 Nov **Hamadan - Kermanshah**

Today travel to Kermanshah, another important ancient city along the Caravan Routes, via Kangavar, a small town of great antiquity dating back to 200 BC, located half way between Hamadan and Kermanshah. Here visit the **Temple of Anahita**, the Goddess of Water and Fertility before continuing to Bisotun to see the trilingual inscriptions and relief depicting Darius facing the nine rebel kings, whom the Achaemenid ruler suppressed when he came to power. (BLD)

Tue 13 Nov **Kermanshah - Andimeshk**

En route from Kermanshah to Andimeshk, visit several important Sassanian reliefs at Tagh-e-Bostan (some are located inside a grotto), depicting royal hunting scenes and the investiture of the Sassanian kings, including the gigantic equestrian statue of Khosrow II (AD 591-628), mounted on his favourite charger Shabdiz. Continue to Pol-e-Dokhtar, to see the remains of the **Sassanian Bridge** before arriving in Andimeshk in the afternoon. (BLD)

Wed 14 Nov **Andimeshk - Ahwaz**

Drive south to Susa to visit the ruins of the **Achaemenian palaces**, one of the oldest civilizations in the world, dating back to 5000 BC. See the nearby **Tomb of Biblical Prophet Daniel**, held sacred by Christians, Moslems and Jews. Travel on to Chogha-Zanbil to visit the ziggurat built by Untash Gal, King of Elam, about 1250 BC. The massive artificial mountain was the focal point of his city of Dur Untashi, and was dedicated to the great god Inshushinak, 'Lord of Susa', symbolised in the form of a bull.

At **Shushtar** explore the remarkable series of interconnecting canals, dam bridges and irrigation works before arriving in Ahwaz in the afternoon. (BLD)



Eram Garden, Shiraz

Thu 15 Nov **Ahwaz – Shiraz**

Early departure for Shiraz. Enroute stop in Bishapur to visit the remains of the Sassanian city built by Shapur I (241-273 AD), the second Sassanian king. The building complex includes a central chamber, a large courtyard which had been covered with impressive mosaics, plus the remains of a temple dedicated to Anahita, the goddess of water and fertility. At Tang-e Chogan, on either side of a narrow gorge, there are six Sassanian rock-reliefs commemorating Shapur's victories over the Romans and other adversaries. (BLD)

Fri 16 Nov **Shiraz**

Full day tour of Shiraz, 'the city of roses and nightingales'. Visit some of the delightful gardens of Shiraz, including the **Eram Garden**, the tombs of Iran's greatest lyric poets, **Hafez and Sa'adi**, both located in pleasant gardens, with a charming "Chai-Khaneh" (tea-house).

Shiraz, the capital of the 18th-century Zand Rulers of Iran, has many monuments dating back to this period: the **Arg-e-Karim Khan**, a fortress building in the now town-centre, which was the seat of government of Zand Rulers and the Vakil Mosque.

After lunch visit the Qajar period **Nasir-ol-Molk Mosque**, popularly known as the 'Pink Mosque' because of its colourful tile decorations. Continue to the **Narenjestan Garden**, also dating from the Qajar period, and the family home of the wealthy Qavam Family of Shiraz. Finish the day with a visit to **Vakil Bazaar**. (BL)

Sat 17 Nov **Shiraz**

Full day excursion to **Persepolis**, one of the most important sites of the Ancient World, the ceremonial capital of the Achaemenid kings with remains of the palaces of Darius the Great, Xerxes and Artaxerxes. See the famous bas-reliefs, depicting kings and courtiers and giftbearing representatives of tributary nations of the Persian Empire.

At Naghsh-e-Rostam see Ka'be-Zardosht (fire temple/sanctuary) and the **Royal Tombs** as well as the seven magnificent Sassanian rock-reliefs including the relief depicting Shapur the First's famous victory over Roman Emperor Valerian. (BL)

Sun 18 Nov **Shiraz**

Full day excursion to **Firuzabad**, which was the capital of Ardashir I (AD 224-241) who founded the Sassanian empire, the last ancient Persian empire before the arrival of the Arabs. Archaeological remains of the ancient city of Firuzabad (called Gur) include Ardashir's palace called Qalah-e Dokhtar, a fortress, rock reliefs, a ziggurat and a walled city. (BL)

Mon 19 Nov **Shiraz - Yazd**

Today journey to Yazd. En-route stop in Pasargadae to visit the remains of the palaces and tomb of Cyrus the Great, the Founder of the Persian Empire, located in the magnificent **Dasht-e-Morghab**. Stop in Abarkuh, a typical desert town, and have tea under the shade of a 4,000-year old Cypress tree before arriving in Yazd in the afternoon. (BLD)

Tue 20 Nov **Yazd**

Full day sightseeing in Yazd, the centre for Iran's small **Zoroastrian** community who, seeking refuge from the invading Arabs, found a safe haven within its fortified walls.

Visit one of the two **Towers of Silence** (Dakhma), dating back to the 18th century where, until some 40-50 years ago, the dead were carried and left to decompose and be devoured by birds.

See the active **Zoroastrian Fire Temple**, the fire of which has been burning for about 1500 years. Among Yazd's Islamic sites is the **Friday Mosque** (1324 AD), with the highest portal and minarets in Iran. Other notable Islamic monuments in Yazd are the Seljuk shrine dedicated to the Twelve Shi'ite Imams; and the Ziaieyeh Theological School, known as Zendan-e-Eskandar or Alexander's Prison. There are also many beautiful old houses in Yazd, among them the **Dowlat Abad Garden**, with an 18th-century feudal hexagonal house. (BL)

Wed 21 Nov Yazd
Day at leisure in Yazd. (B)

Thu 22 Nov Yazd - Isfahan
Today travel from Yazd to Isfahan. Stop at the village of Mohamadiye, to see the traditional workshops weaving the camel cloaks worn by the Moslem clergy in Iran. Continue to Na'in, another charming desert town, half way between Yazd and Isfahan. On a walk through the old town, visit the 10th century **Friday Mosque**, the 17th century **Pirnia House**, containing the **Ethnographic Museum**. Arrive in Isfahan in the afternoon. (BLD)

Fri 23 Nov Isfahan
Full day tour of the beautiful city of Isfahan, the 17th century capital of the **Safavids**, referred to as Nesf-e-Jahan (Half of the World). Start with a visit to the famous bridges of Shahrestan, Khajou and Sio-se-pol, the Armenian Quarter with several churches, including the important **Cathedral of Vank**.

After lunch, explore the buildings surrounding one of the world's grandest squares, the Maidan-e-Naghsh-e-Jahan, including the **Ali-Qapu Palace** with its enchanting music rooms and balcony overlooking the Maidan, from where the Safavid Kings watched polo games, and two of the Islamic world's greatest mosques, the **Sheikh Lotfollah** and the **Shah**, with their magnificent architecture and tile work. Finish with a visit to the **Qeisarieh Bazaar** with hundreds of shops displaying the arts and handicrafts for which Isfahan is world-famous. (BL)

Sat 24 Nov Isfahan
Continue your exploration of Isfahan with a visit to the magnificent **Friday Mosque**, with the famous **Uljaitu Mihrab** (Prayer Niche) of the Il-Khanid period. The Friday Mosque is considered a museum of a thousand years of Persian religious architecture and is truly one of the world's greatest mosques.

Also visit the **Harun-e-Velayat Shrine** and the **Ali Minaret**. From here drive to the **Chehel Sotun Palace**, built by Shah Abbas II in the 17th century. Its wooden columns reflected in the surface of the pool give rise to its name 'The Palace of Forty Columns'. (BL)

Sun 25 Nov Isfahan
Day at leisure in Isfahan. (B)

Mon 26 Nov Isfahan - Teheran
Morning drive to Tehran, stopping en-route at the town of **Natanz** to visit a beautiful Islamic Complex consisting of the Friday Mosque, Monastery and Tomb of Sheikh Abdol Samad Isfahani.

Continue to Kashan and visit one of the most important archaeological sites in Iran known as **Tepe Sialk**. The site was first excavated in the 1930's and dates back to 5000 BC. The artifacts found at this site adorn many major museums in the world.

Visit the historical **garden of Fin**, which was first planted during the Safavid period. This beautiful garden was expanded by the Zand and Qajar monarchs, who added many open pavilions. A museum on the site displays artifacts from nearby Tepe Sialk. Also visit a fine example of a 19th century merchant residence known as **Taba-Tabai House** with its beautiful stucco dome and inlaid mirror work, with some of the best examples of existing 'badgirs' (wind-catchers).

On arrival in Tehran drive by the **Mausoleum of Imam Khomeini** en route to your hotel. Tonight join John Tidmarsh and fellow travellers for a farewell dinner. (BLD)

Tue 27 Nov Depart Teheran
Day at leisure until the transfer to the airport. Evening departure on Emirates via Dubai to Australia. (B)

Wed 28 Nov Arrive Australia
Evening arrival in Australia.



Vank Cathedral, Isfahan



Shushtar



Local restaurant, Tehran

TOUR PRICES

Per person, twin-share	AUD 8,850
Single supplement*	AUD 1,300
Deposit (per person)	AUD 500
Final Payment	6 September 2012

*Single travellers may request to share.
Please advise at time of booking.

TOUR CODE AGS Iran

SUGGESTED AIRLINE Emirates

Please contact Renaissance Tours for assistance with current airfares and flight reservations.

TOUR PRICES INCLUDE

- Accommodation in centrally located hotels with private facilities and daily breakfast (B)
- Transfers on arrival and departure if travelling on suggested flights
- Meals as per itinerary (L=Lunch, D=Dinner) including special Welcome and Farewell dinners.
- Comprehensive sightseeing, visits to museums and attractions with John Tidmarsh including entrance fees as per itinerary
- Lectures and talks with your tour leader throughout
- Gratuities for local guides and drivers
- Hotel portorage (1 piece per person)
- Visa for Iran

DO NOT INCLUDE

- International airfares
- Transfers on arrival and departure if not travelling on suggested flights
- Items of a personal nature, including telephone, laundry, taxis etc.
- Drinks with meals
- Airport portorage
- Travel insurance

VISAS

Australian and New Zealand passport holders require a visa for Iran. Renaissance Tours will assist tour members in obtaining their visa prior to departure from Australia.

DRESS CODE

The most visible daily expressions of Iran's Shi'ite Islam are the modest dress code, and rules for behaviour at mosques both of which apply for men and women.

Dress code for Women: Women will be required to wear a head-scarf, long-sleeve shirt, trousers, and a trench-coat (to the knee) at all times. During visits

to some mosques women will also be required to wear a special robe provided at the entrance.

Dress code for Men: Men are required to wear trousers and shirts with either long-sleeves or half-sleeves (no singlets). Shorts are not permitted.

FOOD & ALCOHOL

Iranian cuisine is heavily based on rice, bread, fresh vegetables, herbs and fruit. Meat is mostly lamb or mutton. The national drink of Iran is chai (tea), always served scalding hot, black and strong. All sorts of delicious fresh fruit juices, milkshakes and yoghurt drinks are available throughout Iran. Alcohol is strictly forbidden. Do not take any alcohol into Iran.

MOURNING MONTH OF MUHARRAM

The tour will coincide with the mourning month of Muharram in Shi'ite Islam. It starts mid-November and ends mid-December. The most important days of that month are the two days of Ta'sua and A'shura which in 2012 will fall on either the 22nd and 23rd of November or the 23rd or 24th of November depending on the lunar calendar.

Travelling to Iran during Muharram may give you the opportunity to witness religious processions, possibly passion plays, and other ceremonies.

The Mourning of Muharram is an important period of mourning in Islam, taking place in Muharram which is the first month of the Islamic calendar. Many of the events associated with the remembrance take place in congregation halls known as Hussainia.

The event marks the anniversary of the Battle of Karbala when Imam Hussain ibn Ali, the grandson of the Islamic prophet Muhammad, and a Shia Imam, was killed by the forces of the second Umayyad caliph Yazid I. The event is marked by arranging 'majalis' (gatherings) to review Islamic teachings and to commemorate Imam Hussain's sacrifice. The mourning reaches its climax on the tenth day, known as Ashura, on which the forces of Yazid killed the 72 individuals who fought, including Imam Hussain and his family and supporters.

YOUR HOTELS ...

(Best available in country towns)



Laleh Hotel
Teheran
★★★★★

Grand Tourist Inn
Zanjan
★★★

Bu-ali -or- Azadi
Hamadan
★★★

Parsian
Kemanshah
★★★

Grand Hotel
Andimeshk
★★★

Fajr
Ahwaz
★★★★★

Homa Hotel
Shiraz
★★★★★



Moshir Garden
Yazd
★★★★★



Abbasi
Isfahan
★★★★★

NB. Hotels of a similar standard may be substituted.

TERMS & CONDITIONS

How to Book

Complete, sign and return the Booking Form available from Renaissance Tours with your deposit of \$500 per person. Upon receipt of your Booking Form and deposit, you will receive confirmation of your place from Renaissance Tours.

Deposit / Final Payments

Deposit (at time of booking) AUD500

Your deposit is used to pay supplier deposits and is non-refundable in the event of your cancellation. Your final payment is due 60 days before departure. Failure to make your final payment by the due date may result in cancellation of your booking and loss of deposit. We reserve the right to charge a late payment fee in the event of late booking and/or payment to cover additional communication and other expenses.

Payment by cash, cheque, American Express, Diners Club, MasterCard and Visa is accepted. A 3% service charge applies for payment by American Express and Diners Club.

Cancellation & Refunds

You may cancel the booking at any time. Written notification is essential even if verbal notification of an intention to cancel has been given. Cancellation charges will be applied as shown below, calculated from the day written notification is received by Renaissance Tours. In addition to the charges shown below, airlines may impose up to 100% cancellation charges.

60 days or more	forfeit of deposit (includes any flight deposit paid)
59 – 45 days	25% of tour cost
44 – 31 days	50% of tour cost
30 – 15 days	75% of tour cost
Less than 15 days	100% of tour cost

The above cancellation charges include applicable GST.

In addition to the above cancellation charges, the full insurance premium together with any existing administration fees is also payable in the event of a cancellation by the Client. If the reason for cancellation is covered by the insurance policy, you may be able to reclaim these charges.

Forced Cancellations

We reserve the right to cancel a tour for any reason (such as failure to reach minimum tour participant numbers). Except for force majeure or the Client's failure to pay the final balance, we will not cancel a tour less than 60 days before departure. Unless the Client fails to pay the final balance, we will return all monies paid, excluding payment for travel insurance and administration fees.

No compensation will be paid in the event of cancellation by Renaissance Tours. A full refund of monies paid for tour costs will be the full extent of our liability. Airlines may impose up to 100% cancellation charges.

Passports, Visas and Vaccinations

It is your responsibility to be in possession of a passport valid for 6 months after the date of your return to Australia. You are also responsible for obtaining all necessary visas, inoculations and preventative medicines as may be required for the duration of the tour. Information about these matters or related items is given in good faith but without responsibility on the part of Renaissance Tours.

Travel Insurance

It is a condition of travel that you are covered by comprehensive travel insurance. You can make your own arrangements or your travel insurance can be arranged by Renaissance Tours. In either case all participants must provide the following information no later than 60 days prior to commencement of travel:

- a copy of your travel insurance policy (or details of master policy)
- the emergency telephone number of your

- insurance company
- next of kin emergency contact

Fitness and Participation

While our tours do not require a special level of fitness, for the overall benefit of the group, all tour members must possess a moderate level of mobility, including the ability to:

- negotiate airports and railway stations without wheelchair assistance
- use combined shower/bath facilities (it is impossible to guarantee walk-in shower facilities)
- undertake walking tour of 2-3 hours duration, including using stairs, walking over cobblestones and other uneven surfaces
- stand for long periods in museums and other sites
- embark / disembark coaches, trains and other methods of transportation without assistance
- handle your own luggage

If you (or we) have any doubts about your ability to participate in your chosen tour, you may be required to have a doctor's appraisal. This would require a doctor to read the itinerary of your chosen tour and provide you with a written confirmation of your ability to participate.

Terms & Conditions

You can find a copy of the full terms & conditions attached to the Renaissance Tours booking form. They can also be found on our website at: www.renaissancetours.com.au or we would be happy to post you a copy on request.



Ceiling of Hafez Tomb



Tan-e-Chogan rock relief



Front: Nasir-ol-Molk Mosque , Shiraz.
Back: Persepolis

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