

IRAN

DETAILED ITINERARY

22 DAYS

Nov 27/24



Iran - an ancient land filled with bustling bazaars, historic sights, superb architecture, parched deserts and beautiful, snow-capped mountains.

With no less than 19 UNESCO World Heritage Sites, few countries have a history that can compete with Iran, from the ancient gems of Persepolis, and Yazd - declared the second most historic city in the world by UNESCO - to wonderful museums, glorious mosques and mausoleums, and impressive ruins with exquisite stone carvings.

Despite Iran's wealth of antiquities, perhaps Iran's greatest attraction is the warmth and generosity of its people. Making you feel genuinely welcome in their country comes naturally to the Iranians.

We visit rural villages with a more simplistic life, to give you an off-the-beaten path, authentic Iranian experience filled with countless memories. Discovering the culture and traditions of the Iranian people will easily be a trip highlight.

FACTS & HIGHLIGHTS

- 22 land days • Maximum 16 travelers • Start and finish in Tehran • All meals included • Explore 13 UNESCO World Heritage Sites • Visit the ancient city of Persepolis • Stay in Yazd - Declared by UNESCO as the second most historic city in the world • Visit Shiraz, known as the city of poets and gardens • Stroll over the famous bridges of Isfahan • See the largest ziggurat (pyramid) in Mesopotamia at Chogha Zanbil • Encounter the warmth and friendliness of the Iranian people

DEPARTURE DATES & PRICE

Mar 31 - Apr 21, 2025 - \$8995 USD

Activity Level: 2-3

Comfort Level: Some long drives.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Comfortable hotels with private bathroom facilities.

ELDERTREKS



SMALL GROUP
EXOTIC ADVENTURES
FOR TRAVELERS 50 PLUS

DAY 1 • ARRIVE IN TEHRAN

You are met upon arrival at Tehran International Airport and transferred to your hotel. The remainder of the day is at leisure before meeting the group for dinner and orientation.

Overnight in Tehran.

DAY 2 • TEHRAN CITY SIGHTS

We begin our day at the Golestan Palace Complex (UNESCO) to visit a few of the many grand buildings, including the Ivan-e Takht-e Marmar (Marble Throne Veranda), the ethnological museum and Badgir Palace. We visit the National Museum of Iran for an overview of the history of the country.

After lunch, we have the afternoon to visit the National Jewels Museum, (*see note below) a highlight of any visit to Tehran. This museum is home to the largest uncut diamond in the world, a pink diamond known as “The Sea of Light,” and the famous Peacock Throne adorned with 26,733 gemstones. (*Note - the museum has been closed since 2020 but ElderTreks is monitoring the situation. If the museum remains closed, we will visit the grand bazaar of Tehran where we can enjoy the sights and sounds of daily life in the city.)

Dinner and overnight in Tehran.

**Please note: our schedule to visit museums may vary depending on museum hours/days and when they are open to the public.

DAY 3 • ALI SADR CAVE, TO HAMADAN

This morning we will depart for Hamadan. We stop along the way to enjoy a visit inside the Alisadra Cave, the longest aquatic cave in the world which has constant temperature of 16 degrees centigrade.





From here we enjoy lunch before making our way to Hamadan. The bustling city of Hamadan, previously known as Ekbatana, was one of the ancient world's greatest cities. Hamadan has a wonderful setting surrounded by snowcapped mountains.

Dinner and overnight in Hamadan.

DAY 4 • HAMADAN, ANCIENT ECBATANA, TOMBS OF ESTHER & MORDECAI

After lunch, we embark on a city tour and visit Ganjnameh, an ancient rock inscription carved in granite. Three languages are represented in the 2m high carvings: Old Persian, Elamite and Neo-Babylonian. We visit the tombs of Esther and Mordecai, Iran's most important Jewish pilgrimage site. We visit Bu Ali Sina Museum and Mausoleum. Bu Ali Sina, better known as Avicenna in the west, was a great philosopher and physician (AD 980 - 1037) who produced 250 books, including the medical encyclopedia (Canon Medicinæ) which was used in European universities until the 17th century. We will also have time to explore the live excavation site of ancient Ecbatana, along with its small museum, which continually offers more as new sites and discoveries are made. We also visit the only standing monument from ancient Ecbatana, a 2,300 year old stone lion. We will also

visit a military museum which has a very good overview of the Iran-Iraq war.

Dinner and overnight in Hamadan.

DAY 5 • TO KERMANSHAH VIA THE ARCHEOLOGICAL SITES AT BISOTUN

Today we drive to Kermanshah en route visit the archeological sites at Bisotun; a large rock relief and cuneiform inscription authored by Darius I, The Great, when he took the reign of the Persian Empire in 521 BC. Then continue to Kermanshah and visit Taq-e Bostan in city.

Dinner and overnight in Kermanshah.

DAY 6 • TO DEZFUL VIA THE CITADEL OF KHORAMABAD

Today we drive to Khoramabad. The city's main attraction is its fortified citadel, known as Falak-ol-aflak, built in the Sassanid era (AD 226-651). This impressive landmark served as a fortified castle, a governor's residence, a prison and today is a museum.

We continue on to Dezful for dinner and overnight.

DAY 7 • TOMB OF DANIEL, CHOGHA ZANBIL (UNESCO) - LARGEST PYRAMID IN MESOPOTAMIA

Today we drive to Susa, stopping to visit the Tomb of Daniel of the lion's den fame, a place of pilgrimage for both the Muslim and Jewish faiths. We also visit the Palace of Darius, a UNESCO World Heritage Site which dates back to 521 BC. We continue on to the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Chogha Zanbil, where we find the largest ziggurat (pyramid) in Mesopotamia, consisting of five towers built inside of each other. The pyramid was built 3,300 years ago and contains the ruins of the sacred city of the Elamites. See the world's first alphabet inscription and evidence of water channels that brought water from 45 kms away. Time permitting, we will visit the impressive water channels of Shushtar, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

We continue to Ahwaz for dinner and overnight.

DAY 8 • TO SHIRAZ VIA TEMPLE OF ANAHITA IN BISHAPOUR (CITY)

Today we depart for Kazeroon, stopping enroute at the fortified Temple of Anahita ruins and the Palace of Shapur. The ruins include an underground pool (now dried up). Nearby, we visit some interesting bas-reliefs depicting victory over the Romans, carved along the river in a beautiful mountain setting.

We continue to Shiraz for dinner and overnight.

DAY 9 • SITES OF SHIRAZ

Shiraz is known as the center of Persian culture, the city of poets and gardens. Today we visit the Karim Khan Citadel for a panoramic view, followed by time at the Vakil Bazaar and Regent's Mosque that features 48 columns. After lunch we visit the Nasir-ol-Molk Mosque to see the beautiful stained glass and blue tiles. We also visit the mausoleums of Saadi & Hafez (two famous Iranian poets), with time to enjoy the lovely gardens at each location.

Dinner and overnight in Shiraz.

DAY 10 • PERSEPOLIS - ANCIENT CITY OF THE PERSIANS, ROCK TOMBS OF NAQSH-E ROSTAM

On a bare plain surrounded by sharp edged cliffs, Cyrus the Great built a palace now known as "The city of the Persians". Dating back to 518 BC, Persepolis has been compared to the Valley of the Kings, Angkor Wat and the Roman Coliseum in terms of archeological significance. Highlights of this UNESCO World Heritage Site include the Gate of Nations, the Hall of a Hundred Columns, the Great Stairway, the Apadana Palace, the Palace of Artaxerxes III, the Royal Treasury, the Imperial Stable, and the Chariot House. The morning is dedicated to Persepolis and in the afternoon we visit Naqsh-e Rostam, whose 4 rock tombs are said to be the final resting place of Achaemenian sovereigns such as Xerxes, Darius the Great, Artaxerxes I and Darius II. We also stop at Naqsh-e Rajab to see the magnificent Sassanian bas-reliefs carved into the rock face.

Dinner and overnight in Shiraz.

PERSEPOLIS



DAY 11 • TO TO KERMAN, SARVISTAN PALACE, NEYRIZ MOSQUE

Today we have a long drive which we break up with 2 stops. The first is at Sarvistan Palace, built in the 5th century. This Sassanian structure dominates an immense empty plain. Despite being called a palace, it may have been a Zoroastrian Fire Temple.

In the afternoon, we stop at the Friday Mosque of Neyriz, which was built in at least three phases, spanning Buyid, Seljuk and Il-Khanid rule in the Fars province. The first phase was in 973 and the last ended in 1472.

Dinner and overnight in Kerman.

DAY 12 • ARG-E-BAM, SCHOOL VISIT, RAYAN

Our full day begins in the ancient mud city of Bam, which dates back over 2,000 years. The Bam citadel, or Arg-e-Bam, was badly damaged in a 2003 earthquake but restoration efforts continue. Although there is much work left to be done, Bam is still an impressive site. We also visit a school to chat with some of the students and teachers.

Next we visit the mud brick city of Rayan which is similar to the Arg-e Bam but is extremely well preserved, despite numerous natural disasters. Rayan citadel is at least 1,000 years old, but is likely much older.

We enjoy lunch in the beautiful Shazdeh gardens with grand fountains and pools. Continuing back to Kerman, We enjoy tea in the old hamam before visiting the interesting mausoleum of the Sufi Dervish. We make a final stop at Jabalieh, or Rock Dome, which dates back to the 2nd century AD, functioning as a Zoroastrian Fire Temple.

Dinner and overnight in Kerman.

DAY 13 • TO YAZD, TOWERS OF SILENCE

A short drive takes us to Saryazd where we visit 2 caravanserais, one restored and one being restored. We continue towards Yazd, stopping enroute at the Towers of Silence. These two Zoroastrian towers set on two barren mountains provided a ritual site for dealing with death according to Zoroastrian beliefs. Dead bodies would be placed in the towers so that the vultures could pick the bones clean, maintaining purity of the earth. This practice lasted until the 1960's.

This afternoon, we see the sacred Eternal Flame in Ateskadeh, which is supposed to have been lit and burning continuously since 470 AD. A visit to the Water Museum gives us an insight into how water is sourced in the desert.

Dinner and overnight in Yazd.

DAY 14 • YAZD, OLD CITY WALKING TOUR

Yazd, the oldest adobe city in the world, is considered an oasis, surrounded by the 4000m summit of Shir Kooch Mountain and the two majestic deserts of Iran - Dasht-e-Kavir and Kavir-e-Lut. Marco Polo visited Yazd in 1250 A.D. and described it as the "noble city of Yazd". UNESCO has declared Yazd to be the 2nd most historic city in the world. This ancient city is furnished with lovely winding streets and mosques of stunning beauty. The co-existence of the splendid fire temples and the holy sites of different religions astonish every visitor. For many, no visit to Iran would be complete without a visit to Yazd.

We begin our sightseeing with a walking tour of the old city, including a stop at the Jameh Mosque to see its beautiful mosaics, before continuing on to Alexander's Prison, and the Amir Chakhmaq Complex.

Dinner and overnight Yazd.

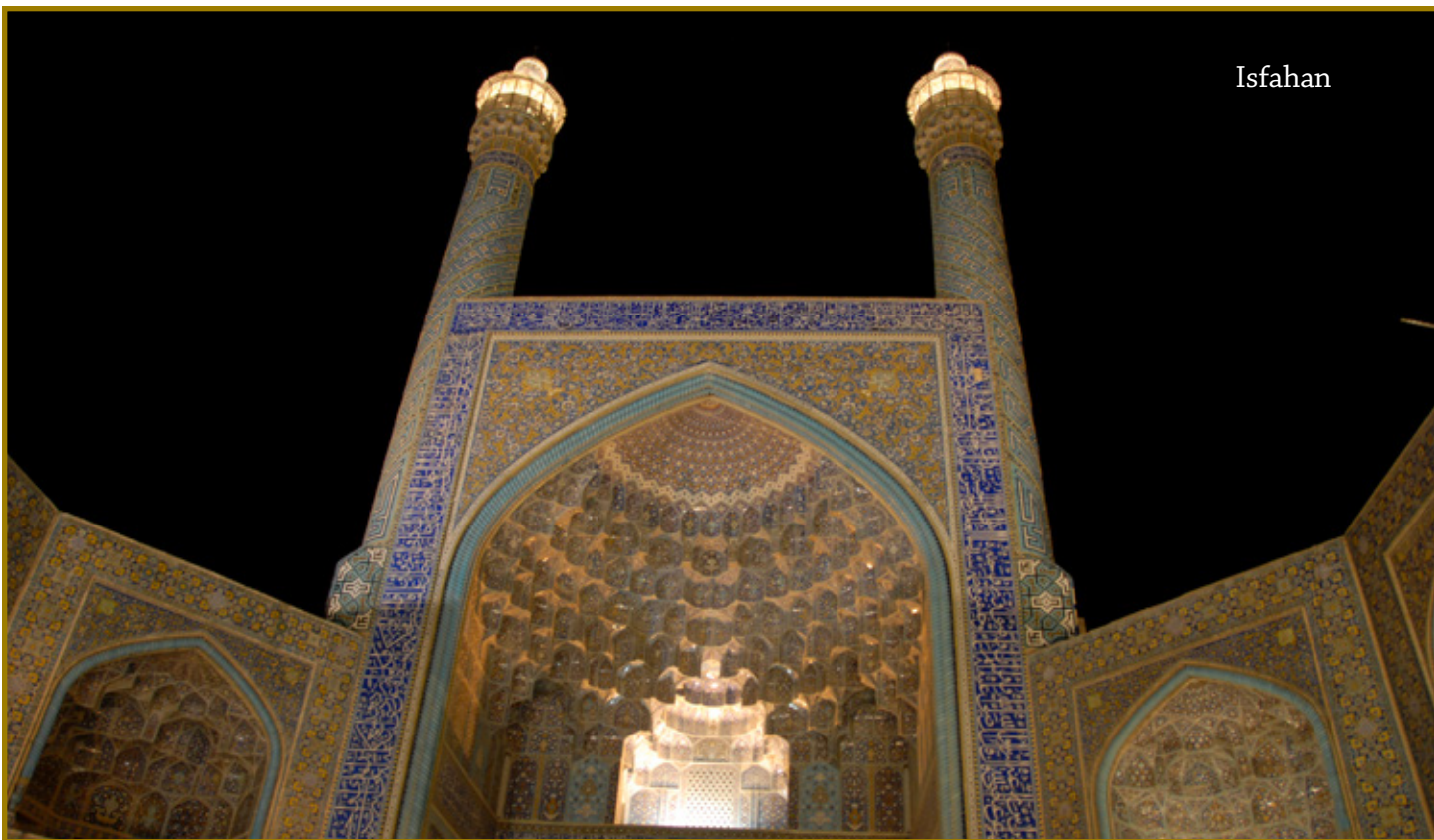
Naqsh - E Rostam's Rock Tombs



Enjoy a night in
a Caravan Serai



Isfahan



DAY 15 • DESERT AND CAMELS

Today we leave the historic city of Yazd and depart for the parched desert. Our destination is the town of Khor in the Mesr desert.

In the afternoon, we will enjoy a camel safari and enjoy a desert sunset.

Dinner and overnight in Khor.

DAY 16 • TO ISFAHAN; MEYBOD AND NAIN

We begin our day with a visit to Meybod. This ancient city was established in pre-Islamic times and today contains many fine buildings from both the Sassanid and Safavid eras. We stop at Narein Castle, one of the oldest mud castles in Iran, along with a restored caravanserai which now features a small carpet exhibit. Next we head to the attractive city of Nain. Nain's Jameh Mosque dates back to the 10th century and is considered one of the oldest and most

important mosques of Persian Islamic architecture. We continue on to the beautiful city of Isfahan. Dinner and overnight in Isfahan.

DAY 17 • STUNNING BRIDGES OF ISFAHAN, VANK CATHEDRAL, IMAM SQUARE

Known as the masterpiece of Persian culture, this former capital of Iran, created by Shah Abbas I in the 16th century, is known as a city of beautiful gardens, fine art and for its bridges that span the Zayandeh River. The city is best explored on foot. We start with the Chehel-Sotun Museum and its attractive grounds. We then explore the city's main attraction, Imam Square, which contains the beautiful Imam Mosque, Ali Qapu Palace and Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque. Nearly two thirds of Iran's handicrafts come from Isfahan and this afternoon we will visit several workshop/stores to learn about



carpets, miniatures and print blocking on fabric. We also drive by the river to see Isfahan's beautiful bridges illuminated after dark. Dinner and overnight in Isfahan.

DAY 18 • JAMEH MOSQUE, SHAKING MINARETS & VANK CATHEDRAL

Today we continue visiting sites in and around Isfahan. We visit the Jameh Mosque, the origins of which date back to the 8th century, but after a fire in the 11th century it has undergone many phases of renovation and today offers a condensed history of Iranian architecture. We also see the famous Shaking Minarets. The minarets are actually part of the tomb of a revered dervish of the 14th century. If you lean hard against one minaret, it will begin to sway back and forth, followed by the second minaret. Also we visit the Ali Gholi Agha ancient bath and Vank Cathedral to learn more about Iran's Armenian community.

Dinner and overnight in Isfahan.

DAY 19 • TRADITIONAL VILLAGE OF ABYANEH (UNESCO)

Today, we visit the Natanz Mosque followed by the village of Abyaneh, part of Iran's national heritage, located at the foot of Mount Karkas. Experience the serenity of this quaint village with its splendid archaeology and meet the local people who speak, live, and dress in the original Persian style. Here we will have an opportunity to visit a wooden underground mosque and the oldest wooden niche of Muslims. After lunch we make our way to Kashan, which is renowned for its rosewater.

Dinner and overnight in Kashan.

DAY 20 • TO KASHAN, 7,000 YEAR OLD PYRAMID

We will visit the Sialk Archeological Hill, a 7000 year old pyramid, as well as Boroujerdi and Tabatabai ancient houses. We will visit the bazaar of Kashan which known for its stunning architecture.

One of the highlights is the historic traditional house that we use as our accommodation. The architecture and ambience are superb!

Dinner and overnight in Kashan.

DAY 21 • PILGRIMAGE SITE OF QOM, FAREWELL DINNER

Today, we make a pilgrimage to one of the holiest sites in Iran. Qom is considered holy by Shia Islam (Iran is mostly Shia as opposed to Sunni), as it is the site of the shrine of Fatema Maesume, sister of Imam Reza, (789 AD - 816 AD).

We continue to our airport hotel (outside of Tehran) to avoid the traffic of Tehran for a stress-free departure for everyone, no matter what time your departure is. We will have our last dinner in Iran tonight.

Overnight at airport hotel outside of Tehran..

DAY 22 • DEPART TEHRAN

We transfer today to the international airport for our departure flight.



QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

1. HOW BIG ARE THE GROUPS?

Each group is limited to 16 participants. Small groups are an important ingredient in adventure travel. Small groups allow for more interaction and more personalized service throughout the itinerary.

2. WHAT IS INCLUDED IN THE TOUR PRICE?

All accommodations throughout; all meals, starting with dinner on day 1 and finishing with breakfast on departure day (i.e. the last day of the ElderTreks tour); bottled drinking water throughout the trip; all internal transportation; airport transfers on day 1 and departure day (i.e. the last day of the ElderTreks tour); all day trips and entrance fees as outlined in the itinerary; tips for hotels (portage), national guide, bus driver, restaurants and spot guides; services of a trip leader.

3. WHAT IS NOT INCLUDED IN THE TOUR PRICE?

International flights, tips to ElderTreks tour leader, alcoholic drinks, visas and travel insurance.

4. ARE THESE “EDUCATIONAL” TOURS?

Yes, in the broadest sense of the word, “educational”. We visit museums and local villages. We also have talks and discussions on many aspects of Iranian history and culture, but this is only one aspect of what we do. We believe that it is equally educational to meet new people on a non-commercial basis, visit their homes and even try to learn a few words in the native language. Sometimes the most “educational” moments are spent having a cold drink with locals in a street market.

5. HOW DO WE TRAVEL DURING THE TOUR?

All land transportation is included in the land price of the trip. We have our own vehicles for road travel — we use a van or coach.

6. WHAT ARE OUR ACCOMMODATIONS LIKE?

We stay in comfortable, well located accommodations with private bathrooms throughout except at the Caravanserai, which has shared facilities.

7. WHAT ABOUT THE WEATHER?

Due to the extremes of topography in Iran, areas vary widely in temperature during the year. The best time to visit Iran is between September and April. The average high temperature in Tehran in October is 75°F (24°C) and

lows of 64°F (12°C). The average high temperature in Tehran in April is 69°F (21°C) and lows of 48°F (9°C). We do not travel in Iran Jun-Aug due to high humidity and temperatures. There may be spring showers in Western Iran in April. Southern Iran is generally hotter and drier.

8. WHEN IS PAYMENT DUE?

A non-refundable deposit of \$500 USD (plus insurance if you desire it) is due as soon as you decide to go and will reserve your place on the tour. The balance of the land payment is due 120 days before departure. Cancellation charges are applicable and these are outlined in the “Terms & Conditions” section of our brochure.

9. IS MEDICAL INSURANCE REQUIRED?

Insurance coverage is not included in the cost of your trip. Please note that medical insurance is not required for this adventure but is recommended. ElderTreks offers comprehensive travel insurance and we are happy to provide you with a quote if you call our office. If you are purchasing insurance elsewhere, please ensure you provide the details to ElderTreks as soon as possible.

**Please note those travelers with pre-existing medical conditions must take out travel insurance at the time of deposit*

10. WHAT MEALS ARE INCLUDED?

All meals are included, starting with dinner on day 1 and finishing with breakfast on departure day. In many cases, we simply order a number of shared dishes, so that we can try everything.

11. WHAT SHOULD I TAKE ON THE TOUR?

There is a detailed “What to Take” list in our Trip Kit, which we will send to you after you have booked the trip.

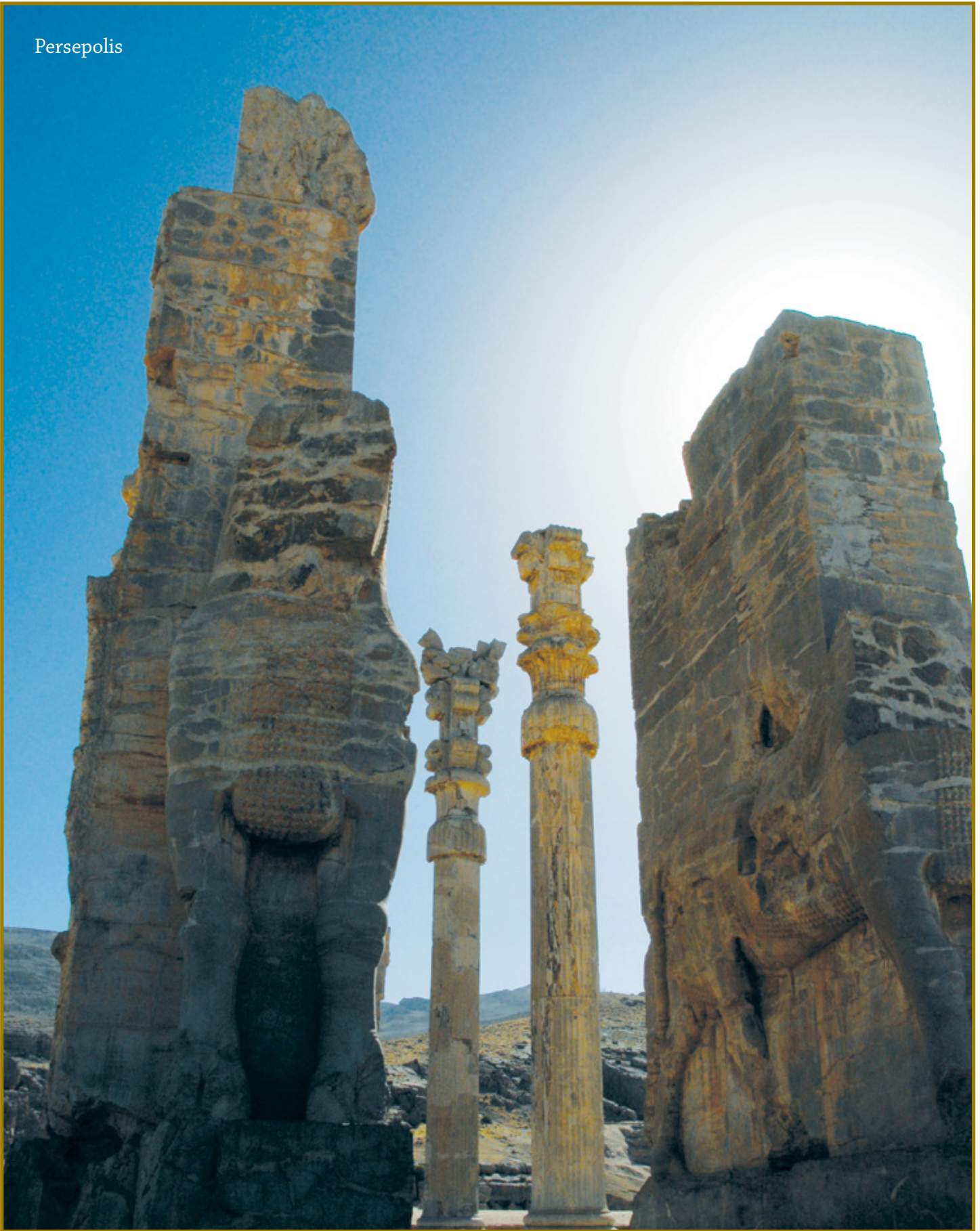
12. CAN YOU ARRANGE MY FLIGHTS?

We would be happy to take care of your air arrangements. ElderTreks offers personalized flight itineraries — not group flights. Stop over enroute, come in a few days early, or extend your stay. Call us for a customized itinerary.

13. WHAT IF I WOULD LIKE MORE INFORMATION?

If you have any further questions about the adventure, please call our office for more details. A Trip Specialist will be happy to answer your questions. A Trip Kit containing further details on the destination will be sent to you once you have booked the trip.

Persepolis



Tower of Silence - Yazd





Isfahan at night

