

## IRAN

### History

During the 6th century BC, Cyrus the Great appeared as the first notable Persian ruler. The Achaemenian Empire which he founded, lasted from 558 to 330 BC and his successors, Darius I and Xerxes, expanded all the way to India in the east and the Aegean Sea in the west. Even Egypt came under Persian rule and the magnificent complex of Persepolis became the hub of the empire.

Xerxes' defeat by the Greeks at Marathon marked the end of the Achaemenians and this great period of Persian history. Soon it was Europe's turn to conquer and in the 4th century BC Alexander the Great invaded Persia and 'accidentally' burned down Persepolis. After Alexander's death the Greek influence rapidly declined, first with the breakaway region of north-east Iran ruled by the Parthians.

The Sassanids controlled Persia from 224 to 638 AD but through these centuries Persian history was a story of continuing conflict with the Roman and later Byzantine empires. Weakened by this interminable scrapping the Zoroastrian Persians fell easy prey to the spread of Islam and the Arabs. Between 637 and 642 AD all of Persia was taken by the Arabs and the country forsook Zoraster for Mohammed. Moslem rule in Persia was confused by the great split between the Sunnites and the Shi'ites. Even today Iran is almost unique in the Moslem world for following the breakaway Shi'ite sect.

Arab power over Persia continued for nearly 600 years but towards the end of that period they were gradually supplanted by the Turkish Seljuk dynasty. At that time the Turks were still gradually absorbing the tattered remnants of the Byzantine Empire. The Seljuks heralded a new era of Persian art, literature, and science marked by men such as the mathematician-poet Omar Khayyam. Then in 1220 the Seljuk period abruptly collapsed when Genghis Khan swept in and commenced a cold-blooded devastation that was to last for two centuries.

Another invasion by Tamurlane in 1380 did not help matters but in 1502 the Safavid era commenced and heralded a Persian renaissance. Under Shah Abbas (1587-1629) foreign influences were once again purged from the country and he went on to perform his architectural miracles in Isfahan to leave a permanent reminder of this period. The decline of the Safavids was hastened by an invasion from Afghanistan but in 1736 Nadir Shah, a sort of Persian 'country boy' overthrew the impotent Safavids and proceeded to chuck out Afghans, Russians and Turks in all directions. For an encore he then rushed off to do a little conquering himself, returning from India loaded with goodies, but virtually exhausting the country with his warring. It was a relief to all, both within Iran and without, when he was finally assassinated.

The following Zand and Qajar periods were not notable and in 1926 the father of the last Shah founded the Pahlavi period. Foreign influence (and oil) then became an important element in Iran's story. In WWII Iran was officially neutral but Reza Khan was forced into exile in 1941, to South Africa, because he was felt to be too friendly with the Axis powers. His 20 year old son took over after the war, the invading Russian forces were persuaded to depart (with difficulty and American conniving), the Shah assumed near absolute power and Iran was firmly aligned with the west.

The Shah's government was repressive but forward looking and Iran was rapidly modernised - at least in some ways and in some places. Illiteracy was reduced, women emancipated, land holdings redistributed, health services improved and a major programme of industrialisation embarked upon. At the same time the Shah's family and friends became very, very rich.

The oil price revolution turned out to be the Shah's undoing. Instead of channelling this new found wealth into development he allowed US arms merchants to persuade him to squander it on huge arsenals of inappropriate and utterly useless weapons. So the flood

of petro-dollars ended up lining the pockets of a select few outside the military while galloping inflation made the majority of the country worse off than before. All through the reign of the Shah and that of his father there had been smouldering resistance which the Shahs had stamped out with all the power and brutality available to the absolute ruler of an oil-rich country which enjoyed unquestioning backing from the major western powers.

As the economy went from bad to worse under the Shah's post oil boom mismanagement the underlying opposition came out into the streets with acts of guerrilla war and massive street demonstrations. From his exile, first in Iraq and then in France, the Ayatollah Khomeini became the leader of the Shah's opponents. When the Shah's previously total US support began to weaken, then buckle, his days were numbered and the Ayatollah flew back to Iran in triumph. In exile the Shah was harried from country to country with America showing clearly how much their strong support means even in a personal sense when a dictatorial ruler finds himself on the losing side.

Once in control in Iran the Ayatollah was soon to prove the truth in that old adage that 'after the revolution comes the revolution'. His intention was to set up a clergy dominated Islamic republic in place of the Shah's rule. In actual fact, however, the clergy and their followers had done little of the real leg work within the country in order to overthrow the Shah. It was groups like the Peoples' Fedayeen and the Islamic Peoples' Mujahedeen who took the real risks and created the situation in which the Shah could not continue. The Ayatollah's role was simply as a central figure behind which all the opposition forces could rally - there might be no agreement on politics but they were all Moslems. Government under the Ayatollah soon proved to be absolutely chaotic and the brutality and repression every bit as horrific as under the Shah. Just as in the Shah's era people disappeared from the streets, executions took place after brief and meaningless trials and minor officials took the law totally into their own hands. Naturally the opposition forces, temporarily united in their hatred for the Shah, soon started opposing the Ayatollah's hopeless Islamic government. Government officials and leaders of the clergy have been assassinated and to further complicate matters the Iranian government has had to struggle with breakaway revolts by the Kurds and an all-out, if half-hearted, war with neighbouring Iraq.

At present the forces in opposition to the Islamic government are varied but probably spearheaded by the Marxist Islamic Peoples' Mujahedeen. The People's Fedayeen have been comprised by their unquestioning support of the clergy. The official communist party, Tudeh, has been even more compromised by trying to support both the clergy and Moscow.

Then there are the various minority groups, principally the Kurds who fought the Shah long and hard for the establishment of a Kurdish state. Waiting in the wings is yet another, and potentially one of the strongest forces, the military. The various military arms were the backbone of the Shah's power so it is hardly surprising that those officers not actually purged by the new government have kept a low profile. Yet some observers feel that in the event of a complete collapse of the clergy-led government the final struggle for power could come down to one between the Mujahedeen and the military.

## Facts

**Population** The population of Iran is about 32 million. Although the vast majority are Shi'ite Moslems there is also a substantial Kurdish minority and small groups of Armenians and Jews. The Kurds, amongst the strongest opponents of the Islamic government, increased considerably in number during the '70s due to the failure of their revolt in Iraq. This had been strongly supported by Iran but finally failed when the Shah withdrew his support. Tehran, the capital of Iran, is also the largest city with a population of about four million. Mashed, Isfahan and Tabriz are other major cities.

**Geography** Iran covers 1,600,000 square km, most of it a great, dry plateau at between 1000 and 1500 meters altitude. In the north it is bordered by the Elburz Mountains where

the highest peak in western Asia, Mt. Damavand, towers to over 5500 meters only a short distance north from Tehran. In the west, towards Iraq and Turkey, and in the south, towards the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean, the plateau is bordered by the Zagros Mountains. A number of smaller ranges rise towards the Afghanistan border in the east. Much of the eastern part of the plateau is a practically uninhabited desert - the Dasht-i-Kavir (Great Salt Desert) in the north and the Dasht-i-Lut (Great Sand Desert) in the south. Apart from the green, fertile northern slopes of the Elburz mountains, running down to the Caspian Sea, most of Iran is a parched, arid country. The southern cities of Isfahan and Shiraz are oasis towns; the country running down to the Persian Gulf is oppressively hot and dry in the summer.

**Economy** Despite a considerable drop from its pre-revolution production levels oil is still far and away the mainstay of the Iranian economy. Were it not for Iran's oil wealth the path towards ultimate collapse would have been steep and fast. Oil was first discovered in Iran in 1908 but the country's proven reserves are much more limited than some of the other Gulf oil producers. The Shah had embarked upon a major programme of industrialisation intended to reduce the country's oil dependency. Although this has resulted in Iran becoming one of the major car manufacturers of Western Asia the programme has slowed considerably since the revolution. Carpet manufacturing remains Iran's second biggest activity although there is now a ban on exporting carpets. There are large herds of goats and sheep (the latter providing wool for the carpets) while agriculture is extensively practised in the Caspian Sea region and in the other more limited fertile areas.

### **Religion**

The Iranians are unique in the Moslem world for predominantly following the Shi'ite division of Islam rather than the more common Sunnite sect. There are, however, Shi'ite minorities in other

### **Islamic countries.**

Minority religions include Christians, Jews and followers of the Baha'i faith. The latter have been particularly ruthlessly discriminated against by the Islamic government. Mazaites, followers of Zoroaster, are found mainly in Shiraz, Tehran, Kerman and Yazd. Iran was once predominantly Zoroastrian but his followers fled east to India when the Arabs carried Islam east.

### **Climate**

Iran is a hot, dry, desert country in the summer and a cold, dry one in the winter. North of the Elburz Mountains, along the Caspian coast, there is reasonable rainfall but in the rest of the country it is extremely dry even in the winter. The middle of the summer, July and August particular, can get very hot in the south. In the desert and along the Gulf summer temperatures way over 40 degrees Celsius are common and usually come in combination, with debilitating humidity. All the main cities, Tabriz in particular, are above sea level which tends to bring the temperatures down. On the other hand it makes winters that much colder. Tehran, Tabriz and Mashed are all fairly icy in January.

### **Isfahan**

'Isfahan is half the world' was a 16th century saying coined to express the city's grandeur. You may well agree it has a ring of truth even today. Isfahan has long been an important trading centre, strategically situated in the south of modern Iran, but it came to its peak during the reign of Shah Abbas the Great.

Iran had been in a period of decline until the start of the Safavid dynasty in the early 1500s expelled the Mogols out of the country. Shah Abbas came to power in 1587, extended his influence over rivals within the country then pushed out the Ottoman Turks who had occupied a large part of Persia. With his country once more united and free of foreign influence Shah Abbas set out to make Isfahan a great and beautiful city. Its

period of glory lasted for little over a hundred years - an invasion from Afghanistan hastened the decline and the capital was subsequently transferred to Shiraz and then to Tehran. The power and breadth of Shah Abbas' vision is still very much in evidence, for what remains in Isfahan today is just a small taste of what the city was at its height.

During the period of his rule Isfahan produced some of the most beautiful and inspiring architecture seen anywhere in the Islamic world. The cool blue tiles of Isfahan contrast perfectly with the hot dry Iranian countryside around it - Isfahan is a sight you won't forget.

**Meidan-i-Shah** The centre of Isfahan is this huge open square which is claimed to be one of the largest in the world. Many of the most interesting sights in Isfahan are clustered around the square.

### **Masjid-i-Shah**

The magnificent 'King's Mosque' marks one end of the square and is probably one of the most stunning buildings in the world. It is completely covered, inside and out, with the pale blue tiles which became the Isfahan trademark. The mosque is a particularly inspiring sight at night when the tiles glow with a soft sheen. The dome is double layered and although the entrance, with its twin towers, faces squarely out onto the square, the mosque itself is at an angle to face towards Mecca.

### **Mashjid-i-Sheik Lotfollah**

The small mosque on the side of the square, covered in cream coloured tiles, is notable for not having any minarets. This is because it was built purely for family worship so there was no need for the faithful to be called to prayer.

### **Ali Kapu**

On the opposite side of the square is this palace with its huge pavilion from which the royal spectators could watch the activities in the square below. At one time a polo field was laid out in the centre.

### **Kaisarieh**

The royal bazaar dominates the other end of the square from the King's Mosque. It covers a simply enormous area and since Isfahan is the artistic and craft centre of Iran it is one of the best places to make a shopping trip. There are five kms of paths to stroll so allow plenty of time! There are other shops, many specialising in the brasswork for which Isfahan is also famous, around the square.

### **Chechel Sooton**

Behind the Ali Kapu palace is a park with its interesting pavilion. The name means 40 columns, although there are actually only 20. A reflecting pool is provided to see the other 20! A more mundane explanation is that 40 is used synonymously with 'many' in Persian.

### **Masjid-i-Jami**

This older, Friday Mosque, is located away from the Maidan-i-Shah area. It has a beautiful dome and some fascinating cellars - a helpful official will show you around. **Bridge** A number of interesting bridges cross the Zayandeh Rud river, particularly the '33 Arch' bridge which runs from the end of Chahar Bagh, the main street of Isfahan. A little downstream is the slightly smaller, but possibly even more attractive, Khwaju bridge. There is an aqueduct between the two bridges.

### **Madrasse-i-Madir-i-Shah**

The theological school of the Shah's mother, as the name translates, is just off Chahar Bagh Avenue and close to the splendid Shah Abbas Hotel. The courtyard is extraordinarily beautiful and restful. For some pleasant views of Isfahan try to see the

Pasolini film Arabian Nights, which was partly filmed on location in Isfahan and some other equally exotic parts. One amusing scene takes place in this courtyard. The nearby Shah Abbas Hotel was elegantly converted from an old caravanserai and is worth a look around - and a glass of tea in the gardens.

### **Minarets**

Isfahan has a whole selection of minarets, many of which have outlasted the mosques they were once part of. A good number of the 43 in the city are of great architectural value but they are equally interesting for views from the top. From above the fact that Isfahan is a green oasis town, becomes very clear.

### **Persepolis and Fars**

Fars is the southern region of Iran where the great Persian empires were once centred and from which the name Persia was derived. Persepolis was the greatest city of this region and the principal attraction today - but it is far from the only reminder of Persia at its peak.

### **Persepolis**

Persepolis (Takht-e-Jamshid) is situated 57 km from Shiraz on the road to Isfahan. The early capital of Achaemenians was at Pasargadae, further north, but in 521 BC Darius the Great started construction of this massive and magnificent palace complex. It sits on a plateau on the slopes of Koh-i-Rahmet and at one time was surrounded by a wall 18 metres high. In 323 BC Alexander the Great burnt it to the ground, fortunately after he had the enormous library translated into Greek. The ruins you see today are just a shadow of Persepolis' former glory. As you survey the barren land around it remember that this area was once far more fertile than it is today.

The only entrance to the palace was the four flights of steps of the Grand Stairway. At the top they led to Xerxes Gateway with three entrances - the western one flanked by two, seven metre-high stone bulls while the eastern one is flanked by two winged bulls with human heads. The southern door leads to the immense Apadana where the kings once held audiences and received visitors. The roof was supported by 36 stone columns each 20 metres high but the main interest today is in the superb reliefs that decorate the stairways. Altogether they are over 300 metres long and when, in Persepolis' heyday, they were brightly coloured they must have been an amazing spectacle. The quality of work is still astounding today. The 'Parade of Nations' shows people and animals bringing tribute to the Persian king while other reliefs show the 'Immortals', the 10,000 man palace guard.

Behind the Apadana are the smaller palaces of Darius and Xerxes and in one of theanderous harems, a small museum has been set up. The eastern door from Xerxes Gateway leads to the Hall of 32 columns behind which is the now totally demolished Treasury of Darius. Below Persepolis stands the tent city which was assembled for the 2500th anniversary of the Persian empire in 1971. There is another entry fee here on top of the entrances to Persepolis itself. In the summer it is wise to visit the area early in the morning or late in the afternoon - avoiding the intense midday heat.

### **Nakshi Rustam**

The four tombs of Nakshi Rustam are believed to be those of Darius I (the Great), Xerxes, Artaxerxes and Darius II but only that of Darius I has been positively identified. There are also reliefs cut into the stone from the far later Sassanid dynasty and a fire-temple from Achaemenian time.

### **Pasargadae**

The capital of Cyrus the Great is 130 km from Shiraz and rather further off the main road. It is nowhere near as interesting as Persepolis and what remains is fairly widely

scattered. Begun under Cyrus the Great, it was succeeded soon after his death by Darius I's magnificent palace and some historians feel that the construction of Persepolis may actually have started under Cyrus.

**Shiraz** Nearly 500 km further south from Isfahan, Shiraz is the romantic and artistic soul of Iran. It's famed for nightingales, poetry, roses and, at one time, wine. Prior to the revolution it looked like the Shiraz wine business might be enjoying a modest revival but now it is back to the dark ages.

Close to Shiraz are the historic ruins of Persepolis - once capital of the Persian empire. Shiraz too had a spell as the Persian capital in the early years of the Islamic era and later, for a short spell, during the Zand dynasty from 1753 to 1794. Many of Shiraz's most beautiful buildings were built or restored in that period.

The two most famous Persian poets were born and lived in Shiraz. Hafez (1320-1389) and Saadi (1207-1291). Omar Khayyam is not so highly rated by the Iranians, he is most esteemed for his ability as a mathematician than as a poet. Both have famous mausoleums:

**Mausoleum of Saadi** Situated Northeast of the city it has gardens and a natural spring. Saadi's most famous book was the Golestan - 'garden of roses'.

**Masjid-i-Jami** The Friday Mosque was begun in 894 AD and is one of the oldest Islamic buildings in Shiraz. It has a 14th century turret derived from the aaba at Mecca.  
**Masjid Now** The 13th century New Mosque is said to be the largest in Iran and has impressive barrel vaulting.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

GMT + 3.5 hours

Itinerary    Iran is a very large country and the 7 days allowed by the transit visa is very tight. Even to do the bare minimum outlined in the brochure, in fact in an M type in winter, its just about impossible without night driving. However lately it has been easy to get visa extensions in the major towns which makes your time in Iran much more enjoyable - however it should be borne in mind that this is not guaranteed, and also the extra time you spend here has to come out of time elsewhere on the trip.

not spend    Suggest you try and make up 3 or 4 days in Turkey or the middle east to in Iran, as there is not much chance to save time in Pakistan and India. 10 days in Iran is about right, but will still need v early starts, especially if you decide to do Tehran.

Camping - Its very easy to find good quiet rough camps almost everywhere once you are out of towns, but avoid any military type areas.

Insurance    Green card from EOL, usually DHL'd/posted to Quetta, or brought from London.

Money    Each person is permitted to bring in 20,000 Rials. Many prices quoted in Toman = 10 Rials. Buy Iranian Rials in Turkey before crossing border - Dogubyazit is best, lots of locals with Rials, or in Pakistan - either in Quetta (best) where you will have to search for money exchange in the bazaar, or on the Pakistani side of border, money change with locals around the tea stalls. The rates here are appalling don't do it unless you have to. There is no compulsory change now, but with the introduction of the DEATH PENALTY for Black Marketeering / Smuggling it is almost impossible to change anywhere other than the bank. ROE currently 3,000 Rials = US\$ 1.00.(June '95).

UPDATE ; The black market seems to be thriving again (May '97) current rate 4800 = 1 USD

Shopping    It is now illegal to export Iranian carpets overland out of Iran. You will not be allowed to take Iranian carpets out (they will try to send you back to the last town to sell them!). They seem pretty serious about this so warn your groups. No problems with killims.

Diesel    Can be difficult to get on TIR route to Tehran, once off this things improve. Stations very close to the border sometimes run out or have long queues.  
Buses    can jump queues, just show them you are a bus. E.g. Maku, Zahedan, and Mirjaveh. Enter Iran with at least 500 kms range. Many stations will not give foreign vehicles diesel - plead with them! Cost has now gone up to 40 Rials/ltr. (June '97)

Gas    Can fill any gas at Zanjan near food markets on bypass, v. cheap and efficient.  
Also just east of Mianeh, on RHS of road -look for 2 small white gas tanks under a tin roof - v quick + cheap. Gas - 3,000 per bottle (June '97)

Visas    Can get extended at foreign office on road into Esfahan from Shiraz Open 08.00 (June 97) hrs mornings for P/I and return at 12.00 hrs for P/U. Each given 2 weeks extension Can obtain in one day if you push. Also possible in Shiraz at police H.Q. just off Gaz Square. Require 2,000 Rials P/P Take all passports, require 2 photos (girls covered), 1 Copy

of passport details Go in early as possible and push very politely and with a good reason to have done same day.

Dress      Women covered from neck to wrist and ankle, in dark (preferably black or navy blue) loose clothing with scarf tied under chin and covering ALL hair. (One lock may now be shown on the forehead. No outline of body etc. to be seen. Men wear long trousers, long sleeved shirts.

### **DRESS PROPERLY AT ALL TIMES AND YOU WON'T HAVE ANY PROBLEMS**

Food      Very cheap at roadside restaurants. Iran has best pistachio nuts, dates and dried apricots.

Accom can      On winter crossings when there is too much snow/mud to rough camp find cheap hotels (US\$ 1-2 p/p) in most towns that will take you.

**BORDER**      (Bazargan) (See plan in Turkey notes - page no ).  
-Can be a very long process - be patient. 3 - 5 hrs.  
-.Make sure NO ALCOHOL and truck is presentable.  
-.May have to make currency declaration.  
-.All hard currency, cameras and carpets written into passport.  
- Carpets are custom sealed.  
- Carnet formalities are now at top of hill, near immigration

### **REMEMBER TO ENTER TRAILER ON CARNET FOR IRAN**

- Playing cards not allowed.

\* LATELY THERE HAS BEEN SOME TROUBLE WITH CORRUPT BORDER OFFICIALS DEMANDING DIESEL TAX OF UP TO 350USD - THIS IS A SCAM DO NOT PAY, THEY WILL BACK DOWN EVENTUALLY - THEY ARE JUST LOOKING FOR BRIBES, AND WE SHOULD NOT START ON THIS SLIPPERY SLOPE - IT DOESNT MATTER WHAT TYPE OF VISA YOU HAVE -TRANSIT / TOURIST ETC THERE IS NO OFFICIAL TAX TO PAY \*

YOU MAY BE ASKED TO GET A FOREIGN VEHICLE TRAFFIC PERMIT FROM THE TRAFFIC DEPT - THIS IS ALSO FREE - YOU GET IT STAMPED AT EACH MAJOR TOWN (TRAFFIC POLICE) SOME TRUCKS HAVE GONE THROUGH WITHOUT WITH NO PROBS, SOME HAVE BEEN SENT BACK TO GET ONE ( AT MIRJAVEH THEY DIDNT ASK FOR IT)

**ROUTE:**

BAZARGAN - TABRIZ - ZANJAN - NIHANEH (TAKISTAN) - SAVEH (BYPASS TEHRAN) - ESFAHAN - SHIRAZ (PERSEPOLIS) - KERMAN- BAM - ZAHEDAN - MIRJAVEH OR can go via QUAZVIN - still bypass Tehran, about the same time but more traffic.

**IRAN ROUTE PLANNER**

		Driving time	kms/miles
Barzagan	Tabriz	4 hours	250 / 155
Tabriz	Miand	3.5 hours	150 / 93
Miand	Zanjam	2 hours	135 / 82
Zanjam	Saveh	5 hours	290 / 179
Saveh	Esfahan	4.5 hours	300 /
Esfahan	Shiraz (via Persepolis)	8.5 hours	480 / 300
Shiraz	Kerman	9.5 hours	480 / 300
Esfahan	Yazd	6.5 hours	
Yazd	Kerman	4.5 hours	
Kerman	Bam	4.5 hours	
Bam	Zahedan	5 hours	
Zahedan	Border (Mirjaveh/Taftan)	1.5 hours	
Roads	All good tarmac		
Police checks show	There are plenty so keep the pps available. Always slow down and good intentions and you shouldn't have any trouble.		

**ADDITIONAL INFO;**

INTERNAL FLIGHTS ARE VERY VERY CHEAP IN IRAN - IF ANY OF THE GROUP ARE FED UP WITH LONG DRIVES AND OR WANT TO SEE EXTRA PLACES , IRAN IS A GOOD PLACE TO DO IT EG FLY TABRIZ /TEHRAN FOR 6USD (YES SIX) AND THEN SHARED TAXI TEHRAN / ESFAHAN FOR ABOUT 5USD PP - HOWEVER REMEMBER THEY SHOULD SIGN A LEAVING TRIP FORM AND MUST PAY ALL THEIR OWN EXPENSES UNTIL THEY REJOIN. ALSO IT IS THEIR RESPONSIBILITY TO FIND THE TRUCK AGAIN YOU CANT CHASE AROUND LOOKING FOR THEM. MAKE SURE THEY TAKE PASSPORTS AND MALARIA PILLS ETC.

They should also extend their own visas if necessary.

**BAZARGAN - TABRIZ**

Driving Time - 4 hours

Route - Maku - Euaghli - Marand - Sofian

Approaching Tabriz take a right at V. Large roundabout. This is ring road. Follow all signs to Tehran.

**TABRIZ - MIAND**

Driving time - 3.5 hours

**MIAND - ZANJAN**

Driving time - 2 hrs

Bypass Miand

At Zanjan go right at first large r'about - follow bypass around.

### **ZANJAN - SAVEH**

Driving time - 8 hrs

**UPDATE -** There is a short cut, not marked on the map but v. easy which can save you 3 hours....

Directions; Take motorway (6,000 Rial toll) and exit at turn for Hamedan/Takestan. Head for Hamedan. After 24km, road for Buin Zara/Saveh on lhs. Follow this road into Buin Zara (50km). Go straight on avoiding town centre. Shortly after take road for Saveh on rhs. Follow this and you'll join Saveh/Tehran road Turn right and follow to Saveh.

### **SAVEH - ESFAHAN**

Driving time - 4.5 hours

Camping -Good spot pre / post Esfahan to save a night in town and let you arrive in Esfahan in good time for a hotel the next day. Few kms north of Meimeh, hills out on rhs. Find track drops of main road, one or two tracks head up into the hills. Beautiful view, nice and quiet.

### **[QAZVIN - ESFAHAN]**

Distance 321 miles

Driving Time 8.5 hours

Roads Good tarmac. Becomes dual carriageway 85 km north of Esfahan.

NOTE: Possible short cut from Nianeh to Saveh via Quazvin.

Coming west - Go down long hill into Saveh, go straight on at first r'about (not signposted) and go straight through town crossing several junctions until you reach a large roundabout. Sharp left goes back into town, right goes to Tehran so think it is second exit - needs to get you onto Hamadan road. Before you leave the built up area you should find a new road to the right. It may well be confused by new roundabouts etc. Ask for Quazvin - thats where it leads. You should hit the ring road which runs around the south of Quazvin - turn left.

Not sure if this turning is signposted off the ringroad coming east. Please advise complete details, thanks. ... Hope you find it!

The crown jewels are now on public display in Tehran for the first time since before the 1979 revolution. Displayed at Central Bank Tehran 1400 - 1600 closed on Fridays. Well worth a look. Park truck at International Air Terminal and catch taxis - cost 500Rials for 5 people. Rumour has it that Tuesday is the only day jewels are open, no information on opening days (sorry!) but you could possibly phone ahead or ask around towns.

UPDATE I believe they are open Tue and Sats only - pls confirm-

### **ESFAHAN**

Most interesting city in Iran. (See map No. 1)

Imam Square Centre of tourist attractions

Bazaar shops close 2-4 p.m.

Blue mosque

Money BM. in Bazaar or outside Bank Melli  
Main Bank Melli on Kh.Sepah just off Imam square for T/C's or cash.  
Or in bazaar outside. Not much difference in the rate.

Contact	Ali, around Imam Square. Speaks good English and very helpful to overland drivers. Knows good workshop if needed.
Accomm.	1. Hotel Sa'di - on south side of Kh Abassabad just off Kh Chahar-Barg-E-Abassi. (no 55 on Esfahan city map).
Cost:	US\$108 for two doubles & two triples i.e. US\$ 5.4 pp per night. Can pay in Rials. Quiet, comfortable, helpful, central. Attended parking in same block but entrance down narrow alley off Shamsabadi.
2.	Hotel Aria, Shah Abbas Ave, Phn 227224/228033 Just down the street and on the opposite side to the Shah Abbas Hotel. Manager - Mr Goodavsi Cost approx. US 5 p/p. Park the truck outside or in the street opposite. Comfortable and hot showers
3.	Sahel Hotel - Same block as Sa'di but on Meydan-e-Enghelab-e-Eslami. Cost US\$ 9.00 per double + US\$ 3.00 for an extra bed. Payable in Rials. Parking as for Sa'di.
4. Cheaper -	Amir Kabir Hotel, Charbargh Street (west side). Mr. Ziaee. Tel/fax (031) 236813. 8,000 Rial p/p (USD\$1.66 June '97). Basic but comfortable. Does breakfasts. Very friendly and helpful management.

Hotels in Esfahan get very booked up so get there early and please send some phone numbers.

Camping	Esfahan Inn. From Esfahan Centre take the road to Shiraz. After the large roundabout you pass a police post on your left where the road curves up to the left. Follow this until you come to a yellow sign in Persian on the right. At the bottom are symbols for bed and restaurant - This is it. (Note, they might not allow you to camp if you have women in your group and may claim that the campsite is for Iranians only).
Transport	Taxis in and out of town and even private cars are the cheapest way.
Meal Out	Abassi Hotel or Kowser - US\$ 5 Try Hatam Restaurant (Phone 41387) Azadi Street. Head towards City centre and take big road on right (dual carriageway) before roundabout. Restaurant is at the end of the street of left. Chals - kebab, rice, salad, bread and soft drink costs approx. 400 Rials/head. Very nice meal and friendly people.
STEAM CLEAN	Very good job on road out to Shiraz on RHS after the ring road, down the hill - its quite a long way out, but if you are doing the visas extensions you can do both in a morning (pick up the pps on the way back)

Caravanserais - Many old caravanserais on road to Shiraz. Good places to spend the night.

Visa extensions - Office has now moved from the one marked in the L.P. Its now on the road out to Shiraz, you will cross a big roundabout with a stadium to one side. Once across the roundabout you will head uphill on a dual carriageway. The police station

you're looking for is on the LHS and immediately opposite the main entrance to the university on your RHS (Look for the policeman standing outside). The entrance you want is down a side street next to the police station. There is a green sign outside in Farsi and English saying 'Foreign Affairs Branch', the office you need is on the second floor. They will need the passports and two photocopies of the passports (no photos - take two photos, girls covered, they sometimes want them). Photocopies for visa extensions can be done on LHS of entrance. They may also want to see the whole group. Cost about US\$ 0.50 p/p, in Rials. Ready the same day if you arrive early and ask nicely. If coming from Shiraz, stop here on the way into town. Easy, easy, easy! Even if you've only come in on a transit visa or if your tourist visa is a day or two expired already they don't seem to care and just give you an extension!

#### Persopolis

Entry	15,000 Rials (June '97)
Museum at south end.	1.5 hours is sufficient.

The large tent city is from the Shah's celebrations in 1972 of the 2,500 anniversary of the Persian Empire.

Darius tomb 2 km north of Persepolis turning - turn west, marked Nagbhi Rostam. Three km from main road is tomb carpark. Entrance fee 10,000 Rials p/p (Jun '97)

**[ESFAHAN - YAZD]** if you miss Persepolis but be careful, Persepolis is on the itinerary]

Driving time	6.5hrs
Camping	Open desert between Ardakan and Nain - good rough camping. Ardakan to Yazd not good.
Ring road	Coming into Yazd go right at first main r'about, go over next two and you have bypassed.

#### **[YAZD - KERMAN]**

Driving time 4.5 hrs

Westbound bridge, for	a few kms before Yazd you will see a flyover. For ring road go under Yazd centre go straight. Signs in Farsi. New ring road around Rafsanjan. Westbound follow signs for Yazd before entering town.
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#### **SHIRAZ**

Many old caravanserais on road to Shiraz. Worth whole day if you have time

#### **SHIRAZ-KERMAN**

Distance	300 miles
Driving Time	9.5 hours
	Ring road around Kerman is changing - follow nose and ask. Please advise.

Shopping	Kerman has excellent bazaar.
Diesel	Bardsir possible

#### **KERMAN-BAM**

Driving time	4.5 hrs
	Try to keep your fuel tanks full from here.

#### **BAM**

Medieval fort worth a look (10,000 R p/p but if you use Akbar as a guide he'll get you in for 5,000 June '97). Fantastic dates - stock up! Fuel station just opposite last turning off ring road into Bam city. Can also fill with water here.

Camping "Bam Inn" Camp and Cook in grounds for 10,000 Rials/head inc. shower - a dump to be honest.

Or Tourist Inn - now closed but Akbar who used to own it is trying to open a new place (June '97).

### **BAM - ZAHEDAN**

Driving time - 5 hrs  
Pakistan consulate here if required.

### **ZAHEDAN - BORDER**

Driving Time - 1.5 hours

Diesel - Zahedan

If you try and fill at Mirjaveh tell them you're going to Esfahan. Travelling east after Bam advised not to rough camp because of smuggling in the area. The police will move you on. Camp on edge of town. Bam-border is possible in one day.

Coming west leave Nok Kundi early to reach border (3hrs) by 9.00/10.00 and hopefully get through Iranian side before they go to lunch.

Stock up on fuel, water and fresh food for 2/3 days in Zahedan as there's not much available until Quetta.

Can get water in customs compound in Taftan if necessary but rather brackish.  
If you reach the border late, its possible, and safer, to sleep in either the Iranian or the Pakistani customs compounds.

### **DONT LET GIRLS SLEEP OUTSIDE WITHOUT MALE CHAPERONES - BETTER TO ALL SLEEP INSIDE THE CUSTOMS SHED IF NOT TOO HOT -**

#### **BORDER IRAN/PAKISTAN (Mirjaveh/Taftan)**

- Should be no problem exiting
- Westbound see notes for entry Turkey/Iran
- If they check your currency declarations they are not very thorough, so don't worry if you don't have receipts

#### **(ABSOLUTELY NO ALCOHOL ON BOARD!!)**

- They will want to see your blue immigration forms.
- On Pakistani side they will check your names into a book, then you'll have to drive around to the main customs compound.
- Lots of locals Pakistani side selling Rials (westbound) - appalling rate and also in Quetta - much better rate.
- Westbound, when approaching Taftan look for red and white mast - customs post is under here with the green Pakistani flag flying.

-  
times  
BM diesel available at Taftan Pakistan out of drums nearly 3 - 4  
the price of Iran if you didn't manage to fill in Zahedan.

## **ADDITIONAL NOTES FROM IRAN WRITTEN BY DAVID LANAWAY (NOV '94)**

Border = Barzagan - No mention of US\$ 500 diesel tax - believe this to be a con by a few officials.

### **\*CHOLERA STAMPS**

Doctor at the border is now checking the Vac. cert. and still looking for Cholera stamps. ENSURE you have them!  
(Believe in the next few years they may request people to carry an AIDS test card).

### **BORDER - TABRIZ (4 - 5 HRS)**

Can get fuel in MAKU with no problems, but they try to limit all big vehicles to 100 - 200 litres as they are the first fill up station in Iran and everyone wants to stock up, however there are plenty of other garages Enroute.

#### **ROUGH CAMP**

Excellent spot approx. 45 Kms beyond Tabriz and 15 Kms before BOSTANABAD. Small lake on LHS. Can camp among trees (Quite close to busy road) or if not too wet and boggy, then follow the dirt track around lake to more trees (Much quieter) generally plenty of fire wood lying around.

### **TABRIZ - QASUIN (8 HRS)**

Enroute to Tehran and plenty of filling stations.

**SHOPPING** - Good shopping in ZANJAN. Drive straight into centre of town,(main road passes through). can fill gas bottles by taxi whilst group shopping.

**LUNCH SPOT - SOLTANIYE** (Town of the Sultans) - Ex Mongol city 14th Century 6Kms off main road to the right (approx. 40 Kms out of Zanjan Largest Islamic egg-shaped domed mausoleum. Vast building V .impressive (Some restoration in progress). Entrance 100 Rials (see further info in Lonely Planets) Easy parking and good for a lunch stop.

**ROUGH CAMP** - Before QASUIN but nothing special

### **QASUIN - TEHRAN (2 HRS - MOTORWAY, TOLLS APPROX US\$ 2.00)**

Follow the motorway into Tehran, pick up signs for AZADI - follow to AZADI roundabout (Freedom Monument). At roundabout take the first exit signed for Airport. Foolow to airport and you can park among the trees on LHS before the main car park, no problems, but check with the Police first.

#### **N.B.**

Have tried several other carprks/Bus stations/Park and ride facilities around this area, but always turned around, venture into Tehran if you dare but this can be a lot of hassle/timewasting, anyway the airport is pretty easy to get back to.

### **TEHRAN (FREE DAY)**

#### **AZADI SQUARE**

10 minutes walk from airport, Azadi Freedom Monument, built in 1971 to mark 2500 years of the Persian Empire, small museum underneath, interesting but all in Farsi, also a space age cafe/bar.

Elevators to top give views of Tehran (smog permitting) but no cameras allowed. Leave in reception Entrance 500 Rials

**EX - US EMBASSY**

**STRICTLY NO PHOTOS**

Worth a quick look for the propaganda adorning the compound walls. Corner shop selling books of copies of previously shredded American papers/memos etc.

### CROWN JEWELS

#### MUZE-YE JAVAHERAT

Open Tuesday and Sunday only 14.00 - 17.00 Hrs

Side entrance of Bank Meli on Ferdousi St. Definitely worth a look, time permitting, entrance 4000 Rials (contains largest diamonds in the world)

#### MAJMU-E-YE FARHANGI-YE SA'D ABAD

Grounds of Ex-Shahs summer residence - various museums which includes last Shahs Palace, his mothers Palace etc. etc.

V .interesting 1100 Rials gave 3 entrances.

### BAZAAR

Huge bazaar area-main entrance -KHEYABUN-E IS KHURDAD sells just about everything (i.e. Fake snow spray - if like me you're probably going to spend Xmas in the Thar Desert - Joy Not).

There really is heaps to see and do in Tehran, suggest EM's photocopy L/P maps before arrival.

#### ARAMGAH-E EMAM KHOMEINI

Mausoleum of the big man himself - still under construction but V .impressive - all the same. Best seen at night when Minarets/Domes are floodlit. Approx. 25 Ks south of Tehran on Ghoms freeway. V. well signposted - can camp nearby either before or after leaving Tehran.

### ROUGH CAMP

On LHS of freeway going into Tehran, large TIR truckpark and some woodland. Gives excellent views and within walking distance of mausoleum. (Free entry cameras OK but no videos). Nose around to see what you can find. Camped in a Graveyard - Locals v .friendly (toilets, washing facilities etc.).

#### TEHRAN - GHOMS (2 Hrs freeway - Tools approx. US\$ 2.00)

#### GHOMS - ESFAHAN (4.50 Hrs - Good fast flat roads).

### ESFAHAN

Can now freecamp on riverbank in park/picnic area just beyond the last bridge on West side of town (North side of river). Plenty of space, lit up at night, toilets, water etc. Police no probs V .friendly, also many locals, a good opportunity for group to meet Iranian families. Suggest group can shower in public Hammums in town. Also many laundrettes/dry cleaners for washing.

### VISA EXTENSIONS

Office is no longer in Police station behind Emam Square. New address is - opposite Esfahan University on road out to Shiraz. Police station - side entrance on left - first door. REQUIRE - all group plus 2 x passport photocopies and 2000 Rials per person. Takes 1 hour and opens at 08.00

### BAM

2 good camp spots - coming East - approx. 45 Kms before Bam. Turn off on road to JAHCOPPE/BANDER ABBAS (RHS)(turning opposite restaurant with domed roof)

About 5 Ks down on LHS - line of trees - large open area which has fast flowing Irrigation channel behind trees.

#### **OTHERWISE**

Approx. 60 Ks beyond Bam (or before if coming West) about 5 - 10 Ks before town of FARHAD Good rough camping on LHS in desert among rocks.

#### **BAM**

Has v. good/v .clean bath house. (HATEM GHEISERI) Locals can direct you, but if coming in from main roads (on turning opposite fuel station) before town centre, turn right at stadium, down 300m - turn left.

**CONTACT IN BAM:** AKBAR PANJALI ZADEH

Tel: (03447) 5842

School teacher/historian - speaks ex. English - used to dealing with overland groups, also helped Lonely Planet people in past.

#### **ZAHEDAN**

New ring road around the town - well sign posted to the border.

N.B.

If you want to stock up on diesel before Pakistan you will either have to go into ZAHEDAN Town or else MIRJAVEH (v. reluctant to give you fuel) as there is nothing on ring road or main road to border beyond ZAHEDAN.

#### **IRAN BORDER**

Slight change - Passport/Immigration office on Iran side is now at rear of Customs compound. Pax still required to walk through border - driver only in truck.

#### **PAKISTAN**

Usual slow procedure at border.

There is a new (?) road, tar sealed 2 lanes all the way to NOKKUNDI (1 1/2 - 1 3/4 Hrs). However in the 6 months - 1 year it has been down, due to poor road building/extremes of weather/vastly overladen Pakistan trucks - it is already v .bumpy (How will it be in 2 years - I wonder ?)

Beyond NOKKUNDI is Government Resthouse in walled compound - run by an old guy by the name of CHAKA-KHAN (No relation to the singer). No electricity in YAKMACH - but resthouse has good water and 3 large bedrooms and large lounge. Can hire for 50 Rupees per room and 50 Rupees for truck. Total 200 Rupees (US\$ 6-7) well worth it.

#### **DALBANDIN**

2 1/2 Hrs away - road v. bad here - new dual carriageway under construction (v .slow) - road is badly corrugated and v.v. dusty. DALBANDIN - v. good for shopping

Approx. 1 1/2 Hrs beyond DALBANDIN on RHS - v .high sandunes - good photos - sledging down dunes on cooker lid etc.

#### **QUETTA**

Can now buy beer in Liquor shop on JINNAH Rd, hotel manager has details.

## **OVERFLIGHT NOTES:- ISTANBUL TO DOGUBAYZIT**

(adapted by Sarah Ewing)

Depending on how many days you have to make the trip, it is probably best to read the notes on the following towns alongside those in the Travel Survival Kit. Find out whether the group want to see old towns, markets etc. to get an idea on which sort of route to take.

Also be aware of the distances to cover, some days will have 8-9 hours driving time, so plan sightseeing for the following day etc. Some towns only need a morning or an afternoon so you can cover ground quickly without being stuck in the bus too long.

For groups heading Kathmandu to London, they fly to Istanbul and then travel east towards Dogubayazit. My group didn't want to see Istanbul as they knew that they were coming back with the others through the south, so they opted to leave early to be able to see Dogubayazit. On the other hand, groups heading London to Kathmandu will all ready have spent 3 weeks or so in Turkey by the time you get them to Erzurum, so they can't wait to get back to Istanbul and get on the plane to Karachi.

It is also important to check with Ibo about road conditions out in the north-east. Often the rains wash away the main roads Trabzon-Erzurun so a central route is to be taken.

## **IRAN CONTINCENCY PLAN**

The following pages are a rough guide to how you can do the contingency plan. I have found it best to play it by ear and have a chat with the group. Some groups are very tired and really aren't interested in doing a lot of running around, also weather and time of year play a factor. Obviously a 'Contingency Plan' has been sold to the agents, which is one going up north and most of the groups do return through Turkey later with their trucks/coaches and therefore have the chance to see the

south, so going up north is often the more logical option (and cheaper). If you have a group larger than a minibus capacity (i.e. 6/7 people) then you will have to be aware of driving times in a large coach, as the drivers are restricted in their driving times and the police do control the locals quite thoroughly whereas they leave foreigners well alone. Ibo at the Londra camping will help you with the booking of the bus and Murat on reception will help with the booking of the hotels. Note that in July and August are very busy in Trabzon so do try to book from Istanbul otherwise it is possible to find reasonably priced hotels booking the day before. The only hotels listed in tourist information offices are tourist hotels and are quite often expensive.

Some of the groups have not been told to bring their sleeping bags so the following hotels are reasonable and have sheets. Use the multi-bedded rooms as it is passable and private facilities are not really necessary. If at any time a EM complains about paying the \$275 contribution just explain that we are more than doubling the amount of money with food, accommodation and transport costs as was the agreement and that sleeping in hotels and eating in restaurants should be looked upon as a luxury on a self catering/camping tour! Another possibility with groups up to 5-6 is to take the public transport National buses which operate in abundance, at least 15 companies are in commotion with each other so prices are reasonable and cheaper than a minibus.

Tickets must be bought on a town to town basis by the day before (i.e. on arrival) to ensure seat reservations for the following day. The services are surprisingly very efficient timewise, stopping regularly for toilets, food etc. but you do lose the freedom of photostops etc. The atmosphere is incomparable. In May we saw no other tourists whatsoever and fell totally at home and comfortable in the company of the locals. Quite an experience! Allow 2 hours onto your times.

## **ISTANBUL**

Londra camping has a good bus service, so the days that the EM;s are in Istanbul give them 2000tl per day for their fare in and out of the town. If they wish to get the local bus and save money or a taxi and spend some on their own, this is their decision. If you wish you can hire the mini-bus out one evening to take them to the flower market where there is a good restaurant with live music and good food, which they all seem to enjoy. The

restaurant is called Kimele Restaurant and Murat on reception will book it for you. If the group are not coming back to Istanbul than you could arrange through Ibo to go to the belly dancing evening. Also if they are not returning you could arrange the city tour - but this they must pay for themselves and I think they are better off by themselves. Ibo again will help you with that. The flights often arrive on a Friday, so make sure you leave enough time for them to go shopping - a popular past time after India and Pakistan and one where they all complain of suffering from consumer attacks!!!

Leather is of course the most common form! The shops and bazaars are closed on Sundays, so they go on the Four Islands River Cruise, which we pay for and is most enjoyable. They can get off at the different islands. After they have come back from the boat trip it is fun to walk down the Golden Horn and see all the Turkish families out for a Sunday stroll in their Sunday best. You can also do to the Galata Bridge and have drink and eat fish. The divier the restaurant the cheaper and more authentic it is. Fried mussels are the speciality and are wonderful! There is a good local bar in the middle of the bridge which tourists shun with abhorrence. They sell beer and raki and small snacks, great people-watching place.

They should visit Dolmabache Palace without a doubt. It is closed on Mondays. You can arrange a minibus to actually take you to the Palace for an extra 1,500tl p.p., which is worthwhile. Even if they are returning with their group letter on in the tour, they cannot spend enough time there. Also they are very grateful for a couple of days rest after the journey from Pakistan - which often seems quite traumatic. Book cabins at the campsite with Ibo.

After meeting them at the airport from Karachi (you can get a lot of freebies at the airport Tourist information office for them) and bringing them back to Londra, it is a good idea to get the together and welcome drink and explain what is happening and find out their ideas on the plan and explain how it works.

#### SUGGESTED ITINERARY EASTBOUND

Stay in Istanbul the day and night of arrival. They will return with the rest of the group and they often want to see Dogubayezit and also Mt. Ararat, so head straight away for Ankara or Bursa if they are to rendezvous in Eruzum/Erzican.

Istanbul-Bursa 4 hours (incl. half hour ferry Yalova-Gebze) Istanbul-Ankara 8 hours

#### BURSA (See map No. 2)

Bursa is a wonderful Turkish city, once the capital of the Ottoman Empire and for some crazy but great reason left off the most tourist routes. It easily merits two nights if you can spare them. You can leave Istanbul early and be there at lunchtime (4 hours). There is a famous spa water bath at Cekirge, where a bath with a massage and towels etc. costs 10,000 for girls and 12,000 for guys and worth the experience. The guys are luckier than the girls since their building is the original and very beautiful inside. It is a good ice-breaker with the group too. You can do this the day you arrive and then they don't have to bother with the showers at the hotel.

The next day can be spent exploring Bursa. There is the Green Mosque and Mausoleum to be visited. From Cunfuryet Square or "Heykel" you can take the bus on the corner of Ataturk Cad. direction EMIR SULTAN (600tl) right up to the EMIR SULTAN Mosque, fabulous views of the city and gardens and then go down the hill to the Green Mosque & Mausoleum about 5 minutes walk. The Mausoleum is beautifully decorated inside and outside - breathtaking! The mosque has a first floor harem, originally home of the Sultan. You can just see the gold embossing, form just outside the door look up behind you. This is locked now and only open to visitors on Friday. From here walk back into town and find your way to the old goose market (bric-a-brac) and then on into the bazaar. The bazaar is huge and you can easily spend 2-3 hours just wandering around. Not specially designed for tourists. It is also full of genuine bargains and not too many trashy souvenirs.

The street bazaar runs from about a block south of Curnhuryiet Square easterly to just behind the Great Mosque Ula Cami. here you will find the covered bazaar selling everything from kiddies socks to sofas to hubbly bubbly pipes.

The great mosque is worth a visit too, in the centre is a huge noisy fountain, a women's section is panelled off to the right and lots of chatter goes on here...children running everywhere, swifts in the roof etc. Altogether totally chaotic and totally different from any other mosque. A real family atmosphere. Very down to earth and welcoming. You can easily stay here for the prayer time as long as you are respectable. Next to the Great Mosque is the Kozahan or Siek market. Many years ago people traded silk cocoons here from the silk farming villages around Bursa, now the shops are very modern selling rolls of fine silk - very reasonably priced - same for Turks and tourists. Excellent quality and value. The rear exit/entrance leads into the street bazaar.

On the high street just before the Ula Camii on the corner is a great Iskender Kebab shop (called by that name) where you can have a big kebab done in the way that is famous for Bursa. They are cheap and available in most places and are so worth introducing to the EM's. Opposite is another restaurant on the first floor but if you look up you will see what looks like a bar on the veranda on the top of the building. We went up and discovered it to be a private club for engineers and they were incredibly hospitable and seemed to enjoy us being up there - so you could try going up there again. There is also the pizzeria/cafe opposite to the left. Not spectacular but definitely different to kebabs especially if the group have been in Turkey for 4 weeks or so at this point.

A good outing to do - needing a whole afternoon, is to go up Mount Uludau, which is a mountain right near to Bursa where in the winter they go skiing. It is for many clients the first time they have been on a cable car. It is a beautiful journey up on two cars, the last though doesn't start till midday so you have to time it correctly i.e. leave Bursa at about 10/12ish. A ski station in winter there is beautiful. Forest in summer - magnificent view and several coffee shops. Not very touristy. You would have time to look around Bursa when you return on the following morning. After the dry arid countryside of Pakistan it is a refreshing place to visit.

There are many hotels in Bursa. The Hotel Palas, Osmangazi Can No. 77, Tel: (241) 213500 is very good, clean and central although it is a bit noisy because of the road. You drive down Ataturk Cad. till the roundabout and turn down to your left and go for three blocks and it is on the RHS. They don't serve breakfasts but you can get food up the road in the mornings.

Another good hotel is the CAMLIBEL HOTEL (241 12 565/25 565). Listed in the T.S.K. Very comfortable, quite expensive for truck groups but 4 in a room works out at about \$10US p.p. per night. A nice way to end a trip if you've just spent the last week coming along the Black Sea Coast and it's a delightful hotel.

Public bus Istanbul-Bursa takes 5 hours and costs 15,000tl.

## IRAN

The journey from Bursa to Ankara takes about 6 hours, so you leave Bursa at lunchtime. There are some good restaurants on the Cankiri Cad. where the Hotel Kennedy is, so there is no need to go far for good food. The Hotel does not serve breakfast but if you go out of the hotel and turn right to the junction on the RHS you will see a pastry shop which serves sweet and savoury things and tea for breakfast. It is open 24 hours a day and the guy on the cash register speaks good English and is very obliging. Don't usually serve Nescafe but just ask for whatever you like and he will try his best!

On the day you spend in Ankara use the coach to go to Ataturk's mausoleum (explain to the EM's what you can do about Ataturk) and afterwards get him to drive you up to Citadel and then the driver is free for the day. After let the people wander around the old town and arrange to meet up at the Anatolian Museum at 13.00 hrs (5,000tl). It is a superb museum and worth seeing, but saying that, they must have a guide. For some crazy reason this museum insists on guides who are university professors etc. and so their standard of tour is high. It should cost 20,000tl depending on the size of the group - highly recommended. Then they are free to wander around more in the town, old and new.

The grand mosque "KOCATEPI" took 25 years to build and is very new and modern. Very clean, airy and bright. Again if you are lucky enough to be here at prayertime up on

the first balcony you get an amazing view over the front of the mosque. Very few tourists here so again respectful is the mode and you are made welcome.

There is a swimming pool in the Buyuk Ankara Hotel, which is pleasant and they do great G&T's in the bar. The food there is reasonably prices though not very good. The staff are friendly. there are a couple of night-clubs, one is called Studio.

Two nights in Ankara is enough. There is an English newspaper printed and it has details of what is going on in Istanbul and Ankara, if you can get hold of it, you may find there is some great cultural event going on which you shouldn't miss.

Hotel Kennedi, Cankiri Cad... No. 52 Tel: (41) 3106151/3115865

They speak nigh on no English but are very friendly and are used to our groups. The area is, in fact, in the Red Light District, and it is wiser for girls not to loiter in the evenings.

Also be aware of pickpockets and be careful on your own at night time. The Hotel is on the RHS of Cankiri Cad. not far after the Roman Baths which are sign posted. It is in the centre of town.

If you are on the public transport Istanbul to Ankara takes approx. 10 hours and costs 22,000tl. Taxi from the hotel to the Anatolia museum costs approx. 3,500tl. Walking distance from the old city on top of the hill.

#### ANKARA TO AMASYA

6 hours drive (See Map 3 for Syrian Embassy)

Leave early (7am) and you should be there by lunchtime. Town is situated in a river valley - very picturesque and vaguely reminiscent of Salsburg or Heidelberg. High on the hilltop overlooking the town is the citadel with Turkish flag atop. Total ruins now, only external walls but the bus can take you around the back and right up to the base of the walls. Allow 20 minutes to admire the view and then squeamish people can go back down in the bus. Otherwise in good training shoes it is possible to fing the goat path down the sheer cliff face. Looks much worse than it is but definitely not for those with vertigo! About 25 minutes to reach the rock tombs below - 3rg century B.C. King Mithridates of the Pontic people is buried here. 5 tombs in all - one visible from the river bank and illuminated at night time. For those who were faint-hearted the tombs are accessible from the riverside but 2,000tl is charged to visit.

Explore the streets at the foot of the hill. Ottoman 19th century wooden houses - one of them recently restored to show wealth of Ottoman merchants. Ask for MOSEUM HOUSE.

Another place worth visiting is the small town museum, well signposted - 2,000tl. Museum not too impressive but the mummies from the 13th century are well worth seeing if you have strong stomach. Mummies are open now on Mondays but if you are lucky. Mon-Sat 8.30-12am, 2-5pm for museum.

HOTEL APAYDIN - Ataturk Cad. 58. 24,000tl per twin room. Clean friendly and central. Shavers in the hallway. 4,000tl per person. On the mainstreet. The managers brother speaks French and will lead you to the best restaurant in town foe an AMASYA herbal and cooked in a wood-burning stone. 10,000tl p.p.

Another alternative is the ILK PANSYON down on the riverbank. As you stand facing the tents turn right and follow the road past Ataturks Statue, on the next block turn right and you will see the gate on the left. Locked but ring the bell. Inside is an oasis, classical music, a flowered courtyard and hospitality that surpasses any I received anywhere else in Turkey!

If you've got a beer drinking group then they'd be better off elsewhere. But if you have a bunch that won't wreck the place this is the place to go. A recently restored Ottoman wooden house, traditional furnishings owned and operated by the architect, Ali (he also restored the museum house). His office is down the courtyard. 5 rooms only to chose from varying in price but with 4-5 in a room it works out at 75,000 per night. Modern bathrooms, light, airy and peaceful. No shoes or smoking allowed in house (all wooden hence fire risk). Breakfast in the courtyard but not included.

Also Ali will cook dinner for guests only - not a restaurant affair - 20,000tl per person is pricey but wine is included. Several cases are offered in this unique Ottoman evening/dinner party. Exquisite!

Book well in advance if possible to avoid disappointment. Americans last year recommended his hotel to the T.S.K. Next year you will have a hard time getting in there. Shame to miss it!!!

On public transport it's probably best to go from Anasya in the evening directly to Sansun simply to cover ground.

Public bus from Ankara-Amasya - 6 hours 15,000tl 7-1pm

Amasya-Sansun - 4 hours 6,000tl 6-10pm

On arrival in Sansun head for HOTEL BURG, Kazimpasa Cad. 36 (Tel: 361 15480). Don't speak English but some French. 20,000tl per person. Good hotel, serve breakfast. Head left out of the hotel towards fain square on the left is the VIDINLI OTELI, excellent a la carte restaurant open late, not too expensive. Maite D' (insists on saying Happy Christmas even in June) may invite you to the roof top cabaret if you're reasonably well dressed. Drinks quite pricey but a good way to see local belly dancing (not touristy Istanbul stuff!).

Next day head out early for Trabzon. On the public transport it is 10 hours drive and costs approx. 12,000tl. By charted bus it normally takes 7-8 hours (10 hours from Amasya). As you would normally spend two nights in Trabzon, if you have good clear sunny weather you might want to break a long days drive with a swim, sleep or picnic on the beach. Most of the coast is rocky and uninviting but good beaches are found at Onye and Persenbe. Depending on your direction of travel they are quite well timed for lunch stops of 2 hours or so. At Onye there is a campsite with loo's for changing and a beach shower. As long as you buy food or a beer here the manager is happy to have you use his facilities.

All along the coast here you will be passing villages alive with activity, either herding goats or sheep,, drying hazelnuts (most of MARS nuts come from here), building haystacks etc. Watch out for traditional ceremonies in the streets especially the circumcision marches. 7-8 year olds dressed in red and white abaks off for the ship. A big occasion in any little boys life I'm sure!!

Hotels in Trabzon in summer are often quite heavily booked - a very touristy place, mostly Russians for some reason. Other overland groups come through here too.

Transglobal use the Otel HORON which is just off the main town square. Not too expensive at 25,000 per person per night. Tel: 031-11199/12289.

Also off the main town square is the Hotel Erupyryal. Clean and comfortable and a good price. If your a budget is tight after splashing out (or intending to) in Amasya you could try Hotel Denya and Hotel Kent. Both dirt cheap, basic, bathroom smells just tolerable but clean sheets and comfortable and central.

Tourist information office a bit schizophrenic. On two occasions I've received conflicting information. The chap to speak to is Necip Albayrak - top guy!!

Tel: 031- 14659. They will direct you to hotels with space if you can't get into any of the above.

Town maps available here for free. They will however try to push you to take taxis all the time instead of the local bus 10 times cheaper. If you've your own bus go at 8am to the monastery at Sunela. Opens 8.30-6pm till September, 9-5pm in the winter-time. Bad rains have all but destroyed the road so allow at least 1.5 hours to get up there. Road OK as far as Macka, then it gets a bit hairy.

Once near the monastery you must pay 4,000tl for the bus to enter the park and a further 700tl per person in the bus. The bus parks up at the souvenir shop and the group follows the path up the hill. About 25 minutes, once at the top, (loos and drinking water available). Entry into the monastery, as in most national monument establishments, so get the group pay for their own tickets, meaning that you can in as well disguised as a tourist!

If you're on public transport walk down the hill to the sea-front taxi stations. Buses leave for Sunela at 9am (or when full). They arrive at around 10.30-11am and allow you 1 hour to climb up and down and 1 hour to visit - plenty of time!! Leave at 1pm, back in town by 2.30pm-ish. Lunch allowance usually works well here or back in town. I gave the group freetime to shop or sleep or visit Agia Sophia Byzantine church with best examples of Byzantine Frescoes to be seen in Turkey. A good half hours walk along the sea-front to the west or you can take the town bus for 500tl. Buy the ticket from the orange kiosk at the bus terminal on the square and they will show you the bus to take. No buses go to Staturks Villa so you need to take a taxi, pricey at 15,000tl round trip. Restaurants on the Taksim Square - MURAT's fish restaurant is good value. Choose your own fish and he grills it there and then, salad and a beer. For the group meal Restaurant KIBRIS just by the square is good value too. Through the snack bar and upstairs into the main restaurant. You may be the only people there so only good really for larger groups. VULCAN cafe opens at 7am for breakfast continental style. Just by the fish restaurants you will see several casino's - these are night-clubs with escort girls for hire if wished. Usually a singer or two lined up for the evening but no gambling. It is still fun to see what the Turkish men get up to when they are not sat around drinking coffee all day!! From Trabzon you have several options depending on the groups interests and also road conditions.

#### TRABZON TO KARS via ARTVIN (See Map 4 for Trabzon)

Very long day. Leave at 7.30am stopping for maybe a picnic lunch near or just after Artrin. Bad roads and recent floods make for a very long days drive - arriving maybe 6.30-7pm-ish.

#### TRABZON TO KARS via ERZURUM

This is a little easier and maybe only 10 hours long. Spectacular mountain views in either direction. Do this journey in one day or stay overnight in Erzurum and spend the morning visiting the town before heading out to Kars after lunch, a journey of 5 hours or so. See Erzurum notes.

Alternatively go TRABZON-ERZURUM-DOGGY missing out Kars altogether.

#### ERZURUM

From Trabzon in chartered bus takes 8 hours. Public bus costs 20,000tl approx. and timing is roughly the same. Depending on which direction of travel GUMUSHANI and BAYBURT make reasonable lunch stops. Check road conditions from Istanbul with Ibo (he will call the police) to see if the mountain road is open. Snow in winter and bad rains often mean that it is closed and central route is to be taken. Hotels are good value and lots of them - if you have to meet the group here and they may already be there ahead of you. Warren uses Otel San Tel: 011 38536/15789. Normally 20,000tl p.p. but you can negotiate multi-bedded rooms, even stretcher beds from the trucks. Does breakfast too, continental style - \$1.50US p.p. Another goody and more central is Akcay, 25tl p.p., open to negotiation and just off the main street. Tel: 011-17330, Cumhuryet Cad. 1, or Otel Kral Tel: 011-16973. Erzincarkapi, 50,000tl x 3 per room.

If you can arrange a group meal at the Guzelyurt Tel: 011-11514 restaurant you'll do well. Soup, main-course - excellent meat choice, fresh fruit works out at about 11,000tl. Otherwise several good kebab places around.

Afterwards try Cafe Kndl for a coffee, western style tea-rooms or if you fancy a few beers with the locals (x marks the spot) on the way back to the hotel try the one with the red lighting. Quite dingy but good music, cheap beer (1,000tl per glass) and very friendly.

The sights in Erzurum are easily done in half a day. Follow the guide book it is good value for this town. The view from the top of the ruined castle is superb especially at the call for prayer - it's quite special! Good photo's of mountains, desert plain and town alike. Erzurum is the third largest university town in Turkey after Istanbul and Ankara.

Most young people here speak good English and many will walk with you a little at first to practice conversation with you. Ask them about the mosques and the history of the place and you could end up with a personal guide.

#### **PERMIT FOR ANI**

To get this permit you must go to the tourist information (8am) first to fill in the form. There is now a government ruling that tour groups must have a Turkish guide to accompany them. The cost for this is 50,000tl! Individuals using public transport or taxi is OK though. No matter how much arguing is done - they won't change. It's either pay up or you don't get a permit!

When everyone's passport details are entered onto a form, it must be stamped by the tourism director. Then you must go to the police station where they will OK it! Cost to enter Ani is 5000tl and can be obtained at the museum in town.

#### **KARS TO ANI**

We left at 9am and picked our guide at the tourist information and then drove the 41km to Ani. The journey takes a bit over 1 hour over poor roads. Interesting drive through small villages and farmlands. Walking around Ani takes about half an hour. It is spread over a wide area and there are a couple of churches with faded frescoes to see but the rest of the buildings have pretty much fallen down although attempts are underway to restore them.

Across the river is the Soviet border and you are not supposed to take photos in that direction or shout to attract guards attention in any way! In the afternoon, back in Kars, it was possible to visit Kars Kalesi as it was Saturday! It gives good views from the top. It's still a military area and some parts are out of bounds. Kars itself doesn't have much of an attraction. It is fairly much a typical east Turkey town. There's a castle overlooking the town which is still partly used by the military. The rest of it is in ruins but it gives good views from top.

Hotel Temel charges \$17.11US per double room and 4,000tl p.p. for breakfast. It has a bar on the top floor. Tel: 0211-1376

From Erzurum it takes about 4 hours on a chartered bus. On public transport though you must take on a bus first to Agri, then change and connect with the Dogubayazit bus.

Journey takes about 6 hours and connections are frequent. Book the two buses through Erzurum and pay

there but collect tickets in Agri for the second leg. Total price is 15,000tl. The driver will show you the hotel Isfahan to meet up with Sundowners groups. Emniyet Cad. 26, Tel: 0278 1159/2045. Modern, comfortable and hot showers.

#### **DOGUBAYZIT**

The journey from Kars to Doggy takes about 5 hours. If you have the time to go and via Tuzluca road, go visit the Saltimes. You just walk into an open tunnel and follow it down, listening to the sound of hammering and suddenly you come across a whole load of men hand mining the salt in the most archaic manner (it compares well if letter on in the tour you take them to the ultra-modern Saltmines at Bad Reichenhal near Salzburg in Austria. The men love seeing strangers down there and may well offer you some tea, in a somewhat bizarre setting). Forget trying to see the wall paintings north of Kagizman at Camuslu Koya - Kaya resimleri, interesting they may sound, impossible to find! Though the village on the way up is great and the people are very friendly.

You should arrive about the same time as the truck in Doggy. They may be camping up at Ishak Pasha - there is a good campsite there, although no hot water.

Memo camping Tel: (378) 1487

You could phone from the town and see if they are there (ask if there are any trucks as they seem to confuse Exodus with US (how dare they!) or you can go up there with the coach/truck and at the same time the clients visit the lovely Palace of Ishak Pasha.

Alcohol is served in the Hotel Isfahan (let's get our priorities right!!) as well as a telex and telephone for contacting London. They also have a sauna which you can hire out and

squeeze 6 people in. You may equally find the truck bits in their car park and the group staying in small hotels around the town, if they are not up at Memo camping.

#### DOGGY TO KARS

Leave about 8.20am and drive to Tezluca for food. Arrive Kars at about 1pm.

#### IRAN OVERFLIGHT - POSSIBLE ITINERARY

Day 1. Dogubayzit - Erzurum (See map No. 8 - Turkey section).

a.m. Visit Isak Pasa Palace - approx. 1.5 hours round trip from Hotel Isfahan.

Entrabce 2,000tl p.p.

p.m. Approx. 4.5 hours drive Doggy to Erzurum.

Hotel San (Yeni San)

Kazum Karabeker Cd. no 10 (Erzurum)

Tel: 15789

Cost approx.: \$5.00 p.p.

Hot water and private bathrooms. Friendly and helpful management.

Breakfast available.

Day 2. Erzurum - Trabzon (See map No. 4)

Approx. 7 hours drive After 2 hours possible to stop Beyburt for shops, banks, PTT etc. (buy picnic etc.)

Picnic in mountains or lunch at Gumushane

Hotel Erzurum (Trabzon)

Tel: 11362

Near Hotel Usta just off the main square.

Cost pprox. \$4.50 p.p.

Hot water, some private baths, sea view and friendly staff.

Breakfast at the cafe Kugu in square

Choice of restaurants in square for dinner.

Day 3. Trabzon - Samsun (option 1)

a.m. Optional visit to Sumela monastery. Allow 4 hours return trip to Trabzon.

p.m. 6 hours drive to Samsun

Hotel Kristal

Kazim Pasa Cad. behind bazaar

Approx. \$4.30 p.p.

Hot water, private baths.

Run by ancient cigar-smoking gent who speaks perfect American English.

Day 3. Trabzon - Amasya (option 2)

7-8 hours drive. Slight detour from route, but worth a visit. Town is sited on a river surrounded by high cliffs with ancient tombs carved into the rock.

Hotel Konfor Palas town centre, by river

Approx. \$3.00 p.p.

No hot water, wash basins only in the rooms, but nice situation & balconies with view of cliff tombs, citadel etc.

Breakfast at Otel Turban if Cafe in square is closed.

Allow 2-3 hours to walk up to tombs, citadel and visit museum etc. Amasya to

Istanbul can be done in one long day in minibus or stop at

Ankara.

Day 4. Samsun/Amasya - Ankara

7.5 or 6.5 hours respectively

a.m. if visiting Boguskale/Hattusas leave 8am arrive 12.00.

p.m. Leave 2pm and arrive Ankara 5.30pm.

Hotel Konak

Camkiri Cad. 50 (Ulus)

Tel: 311 40 21  
 Hot water, private baths  
 Approx. \$7.50 p.p.  
 Evening meal: Take taxi to Bayurdır Sokak (approx. \$1.80) choice of good, cheap restaurants and bars.  
 Possible to hire Turkish baths for the group (mixed).  
 Sengal Haman, Anafartalar Cad. Ulus  
 \$3.00 p.p. after 6pm.

**Day 5.** Ankara - Istanbul  
 Option a.m. in Ankara.  
 Ataturk Mausoleum worth a visit.  
 Approx. 6.5 hours drive to Istanbul  
 Londra camping  
 Londra Asfalti  
 Bakirkoy  
 Istanbul  
 Tel: 559 37 27  
 Cost approx. \$5.50 p.p. (bungalows)

Recommended restaurants - Galata Bridge has various fish and seafood restaurants right on the water (literally).  
 Vitamin restaurant - Sultanahmet, near Pudding shop.

#### EASTERN TURKEY:

Dogubgyazit	* Isak Pasa Sarayı - 7km from town (monastery) * View of Mt Ararat - 5165m resting place of Noah's ark.
Erzurum	* Cifte Minareli Madrese - Twin Minaret Seminary * Ula Cam - Great Mosque (1179) * Ue Kumbetler - Seljuk Tombs (11005) * Erzurum Kalesi - Erzurum Castles (4005) * Ottorman Mosques * Museum * Bazaar
Outside Erzurum	* Valley of Tortum, Kackar Mountains * Yusufeli - 55km. Orchards of cherries and apricots. * 48m Tortum Selalesi (waterfall) - if water is not diverted.
Kars	* Kars Muzesi - Excavations at Ami * Kumbet Camu - Drum Dome Mosque * Old Bridge - Tas Kopru - 14005
Ani	* Ruined city - 44km east of Kars
need to	* Medieval Ghost Town - next to Russian border - you will need permission from tourist information in Kars before allowed enter.

#### BLACK SEA COAST

Artvin 215km	* Mountainous, beautiful road from Erzurum to Artvin -
Hopa	* Medieval castles guarding the steep mountain passes. * Eastern most Turkish Port - 30km to Soviet Frontier
Rize	* Start of tea plantations
Trabason	* Heart of Turkey's Tea Plantation area * 20th century oil-boom town

AYA of St	* lots of old churches converted to mosques. Famous one is SOFYA now a museum - 2,000tl * CITADEL - heart of old town west from Taksim * Church Anne's * Church of Panaghia Chrysocephalos (900s) * Ataturk's villa - outskirts of town * Sumela Monastery - 54km out of town. Requires 3 hours via
Macka	* Start to see hazelnuts on roadside to dry
Sumela	* 50km from Trabzon * 1200m above sea level * found in the 7th century * Abandoned in 1923 * Church of the Assumption of the Virgin hanging out of the rods * Large monastery built against the rock wall in 1340.
Giresun	* Heart of cherry trees
Unye	* Famous beach resort area
Samsun	* Major port and commercial area
Amasya	* on the river Yesilirmak * Museum - Pontic Artefacts - Seljuk Mummies
Tombs	* Sultan Beyazit Camii - 1486 - Principle Mosque * Rock & Citadel - Tombs of Pontus 300s BC * Hisar - citadel is above the tombs
CENTRAL ANATOLIA	
ANKARA	* Museum of Anatolian civilisation * Hisar - Fortress Sark Kulesi (Tower) & old villages * Roman Ankara - column of Julien - Haci Bayram Camii - revered Mosque (1900) * Camhuriyet Muzesi - Equestrian statue of Ataturk * Museum - New produce market (Yeni Hallor) * Anit Kabir - Ataturk's Mausoleum with museum
Ethnography	