

Inside Iran: May 19-30, 2010

Lecturer: Dr. Thomas M. Ricks is an independent scholar of the social and cultural history of Iran, and Palestine. After two years in Iran as a Peace Corps Volunteer (1964-66), he completed a MA degree in Persian Language and Literature and a Ph.D. in Middle East History at Indiana University, before spending the next 30 years (1975-2005) teaching and researching at Macalester College and at the universities of Georgetown (Washington DC), Bir Zeit (Ramallah), Villanova (Villanova, PA), and Pennsylvania (Philadelphia, PA). He has completed works on Iranian literature, culture and society (*Literature of Contemporary Iran* and *Critical Perspectives on Modern Persian Literature*) and on Palestinian social and cultural history. He is presently completing a social and cultural history of two Iranian boys' schools in Tehran and Tabriz (Alborz College and Memorial School respectively).

Council Tour Administrator: Dr. Carla Thorson, Vice President for Public Programs, World Affairs Council of Northern California, earned an MA and PhD in political science at UCLA. She holds an M.Litt. in Modern Russian History from the University of Oxford, and a BA in History from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She has led previous Council trips to Russia, Asia and Central Asia.

Dr. Ricks will provide lectures and discussion opportunities to enhance our understanding of Iran. Throughout the program we will request briefings and meetings with local leaders from a variety of backgrounds. Because certain elements of the Iranian regime are not in agreement with US foreign policy, participants must be sensitive to the constraints that may be placed upon open discussion and the exchange of ideas with the Iranian people. We will add these special meetings and discussions as the trip draws near.

May 19: Wednesday. Depart the USA

May 20: Thursday. Tehran. Arrive very late at night. Upon arrival transfer to the former Intercontinental Hotel, now the *Laleh Hotel*.

May 21: Friday. Tehran. Enjoy a full day of sightseeing in Tehran concentrating on its excellent museums. Compared to Iran's other capitals, Tehran is not considered an old city. Tehran remained relatively unimportant until the end of the eighteenth century when it was made the capital by Agha Mohammad Khan, the founder of the Ghajar Dynasty who was crowned in Tehran in 1795. It was expanded by his successor Fath-Ali Shah who built the Golestan Palace. Today it is a modern metropolis.

The first stop will be at the Archaeological Museum with its fine collection including a stone capital of a winged lion from Susa and a sixth century B.C. audience hall relief of Darius the Great from the Treasury at Persepolis.

Continue on to the Glass and Ceramics Museum of Iran, which is housed in a building dating to the beginning of this century. Remaining from the Ghajar period it was built as a private residence and currently offers an excellent collection of glassware and ceramics.

Enjoy lunch back at the Laleh Hotel before visiting the Carpet Museum which has a small number of excellent Iranian carpets.

Return to the hotel driving by the former U.S. Embassy. **B,L,D.**

May 22: Saturday. Tehran. Morning visit to the Reza Abbasi Museum which is home to a superior collection of Persian miniatures.

Enjoy lunch at the Nederi Restaurant, a trendy restaurant well-known for attracting Tehran's intelligentsia. After lunch view the Iranian crown jewels. This spectacular collection of jewels, stored in the basement vault of the Bank Milli Iran, was closed for many years but is now open on certain days to the public. Admire the world's largest uncut diamond as well as the Peacock Throne. **B, L, D.**

May 23: Sunday. Tehran/Shiraz Morning in Tehran with an afternoon departure for Shiraz. Upon arrival in Shiraz transfer to the *Homa Shiraz Hotel*.

Dinner this evening at the delightful Shaterabbas Restaurant which serves superb Persian cuisine. **B,L,D.**

May 24: Monday. Shiraz/Persepolis/Shiraz. Morning drive to Persepolis the ceremonial capital of the Achaemenian Empire and perhaps one of the most beautiful and spectacular archaeological sites surviving today. The administrative center of the Achaemenians was actually at Susa, shifting during the summer to Hamadan while Persepolis was reserved only for ritual celebrations. Persepolis stands on a limestone terrace overlooking the Marvdasht plain, at the foot of the Kuh-e Rahmat, the Mountain of Mercy. Work on the complex was begun by Darius I about 520 BC who created and unified an empire which eventually was larger and more efficiently ruled than any other in the ancient world. Work was carried on by Xerxes and Artaxerxes until 460 BC and, despite the ravages of foreign invaders and time, its unmatched splendor is still evident. In the spring of each year at the time of the New Year, the ruler and his court gathered at Persepolis to receive the tribute of subject nations and to reestablish universal order for the coming year. In this way Persepolis continued to play an important role in Achaemenian political and religious life until its accidental or deliberate destruction by fire when conquered by Alexander the Great in 330 BC.

The most important buildings at Persepolis were crowded into a terrace of natural rock that rises over 30 feet above the plain on three sides and abuts a low mountain on the fourth side. There are about 15 major buildings, including the Apadana, the Hall of a Hundred Columns, the Gate House of Xerxes, the Treasury, the Harem and the private palaces of the different rulers.

At the head of the monumental double-ramped staircase was the Gate of All Nations, built by Xerxes and still surviving intact. It is flanked by colossal winged bulls with human heads. Delegations to the Achaemenian court paused here before entering the Apadana or Hall of Audience of Darius the Great. The superb bas reliefs here depict the flow of ritual processions that once passed through the palaces and audience halls of the Achaemenian kings.

After lunch sitting in the shade of grape vines at the Laleh Tavos Restaurant visit Naghsh-e Rostam which is located near Persepolis and which contains the carved tombs of four Achaemenian tombs. The tombs are widely accepted to be those of Darius the Great, Xerxes, Artaxerxes and Darius II. There are also eight reliefs from later in the Sassanian dynasty which are cut into the stone below the facades of the tombs. These fine reliefs depict various scenes of

imperial conquests as well as a probable fire temple from Achaemenian times. After a truly wonderful day return to Shiraz.

Dinner at a local restaurant this evening. **B,L,D.**

May 25: Tuesday. Shiraz. Spend the morning exploring Shiraz beginning at the Fars Museum. This octagonal pavilion was originally built by Karim Khan and was used for official receptions. It now houses a collection relating to the life of Karim Khan and other historic artifacts relating to the province. Perhaps more interesting than the museum is the building itself which is beautiful with its charming tiled panels and painted roof. Explore one of the best preserved of the Shiraz houses which is the ancestral home of the Qaqam family and now the home of the Asia Institute. The name of the house is Narenjestan, which means Place of Oranges and it was built in the 1870's by Mirza Ebrahim Khan. The Qaqam family were originally merchants who came to Shiraz from Qazvin but soon became active in government serving under the Zand, Ghajar and Pahlavi Dynasties. Narenjestan preserves the elegance and refinement enjoyed by upper-class Persian families in the 19th century. The living quarters of men, women and guests, working areas, cool gardens and well-equipped kitchens are all visible in this organized Persian household. The mirrored porch was the focal point of the men's quarters and opens into gardens lined with date palms. Inside it is possible to view the private collection of Arthur Pope which includes some rather fine pieces of early Pakistan sculpture.

Drive to the Friday Mosque which is the oldest mosque in Shiraz. Its foundations can be traced to the ninth century although what is seen today largely dates from a Safavid rebuilding. An unusual stone structure built in 1351 stands in the center of the courtyard and is said to be modeled on the Kabeh in Mecca. It now serves as a repository for the Korans of the mosque.

After lunch explore the bazaar of Shiraz, considered by many to be the finest in Iran and, here, discover the heart of the city. The Iranian still identifies with the bazaar as a place that is traditional where he or she can go to buy and bargain, hear the local gossip, arrange a marriage, drink tea and pray. Merchandise is brought on men's backs or by small wagons through narrow lanes where customers are loudly bargaining. Blacksmiths, tinkers, jewelers, carpenters, blanket-makers and shopkeepers fill the bazaar with their own individual music while money-changers ply their trade along the main street outside the covered bazaar.

May 26: Wednesday. Shiraz/Isfahan. Morning drive to Isfahan. Upon arrival transfer to the *Abbasi Hotel*, a converted caravanserai. The large double-storied caravanserai was originally constructed to finance the student and professors of the college but was later transformed into a wonderful hotel where guests can drink tea inside a garden courtyard with the full view of the Madrassa Chahar Bagh's magnificent yellow and turquoise dome. **B,L,D.**

Isfahan is perhaps the most beautiful of all Iranian cities. After consolidating his control, Shah Abbas I initiated one of the world's grandest experiments in city planning, moving the capital from Qazvin to Isfahan in 1598 where it remained until 1722. Mosques, palaces, bazaars and public parks were built under the monarch's personal supervision over the next thirty years.

This afternoon enjoy a city orientation.

Dinner at a local restaurant this evening. **B,L,D.**

May 27: Thursday. Isfahan. The central focus of this fascinating city, which never failed to inspire and awe European merchants and ambassadors to the Safavid court, is the immense

Maydan-e Shah, or Royal Square. The square is actually a huge rectangle measuring 1,674 feet by 540 feet and is enclosed by double-storied arcades. Four jewels of seventeenth century architecture adorn each side of the square, symbolizing the political, economic and religious spheres of Safavid Persia. On the north side is the entrance to the Royal Qaysariyyeh Bazaar, on the east side is the Lotfollah Mosque. This Mosque was constructed between 1603 and 1617 and served as a private chapel for the Imperial family. The domed ceiling has the finest faience tile work of seventeenth century Persia. The inscriptions were executed by Ali Reda Abbasi, the greatest calligrapher of the Safavid period. On the west is the Ali Qapu Palace and on the southern side, the towering portal of the Shah Mosque, a monument to the grand vision of Shah Abbas the Great who died shortly before its completion. Spend the morning here before enjoying lunch at a restaurant called Shahrzad. One of their specialties here is minced lamb cooked with fragrant spices which is then served between two pieces of traditional bread.

The afternoon is spent exploring the Bazaar of Isfahan and learning more about traditional crafts in Iran. See carpets, meet a well-known painter of miniatures, wander through aisles of old copper and brass ware, gold jewelry, lacquered boxes and many other wonderful items! **B,L,D.**

May 28: Friday. Isfahan. Spend the morning admiring some of the five bridges crossing the Zayendehrud River at Isfahan. Perhaps the most beautiful is the two-story Khaju Bridge which was constructed by Shah Abbas II in about 1650. It is essentially a bridge superimposed upon a dam, 436 feet long, and supported by twenty-four stone arches. The flow of the river can be regulated by sluice gates, which raise the water level a full six feet for irrigation of upstream fields. The second story is flanked by arcaded galleries leading to hexagonal pavilions. These tiled and painted rooms were known as the Princes' Parlors and were reserved for the pleasure outings of Shah Abbas II and his court. The oldest bridge is the Shahrestan where, over massive stone piers dating from the Sassanid period, the Seljuks built pointed arches designed to allow for the rush of spring waters. After seeing the Bridge of 33 Arches, drive to the Armenian quarter of Isfahan. This dates from the time of Shah Abbas who set up this colony of Christians from the town of Jolfa and named it New Jolfa. There are fourteen churches here and we have planned a walking tour through the narrow, twisting alleys and streets.

In the afternoon visit the Friday Mosque, which is like a museum with its tiled ivans, vaulted ceilings and lofty domes. The complex and magnificent Friday Mosque in Isfahan displays more than 800 years of Persian religious architecture, from the eleventh to the eighteenth centuries, and is truly one of the world's greatest mosques. It is built using a traditional plan with four ivans, or vaulted halls, placed on the axes of a central courtyard. The northwestern ivan was originally constructed during the Seljuk period in about 1121 although its vibrant surface decoration dates from the reign of Shah Soltan Hosayn. Also in the mosque you can see the Mongol influence on Persian architecture (Chingghis Khan's son, Olgedi, lived here as a Shah) and also the Timurid style.

From here drive to the Palace of Forty Columns, a charming pavilion used to receive dignitaries and ambassadors. Here the walls and ceilings are covered with frescoes and paintings and the superb wooden roof of the porch is painted with a series of geometrical decorations interspersed with flowers. The roof was waterproofed by covering it with a fresh layer of beaten egg every year, the weight of which has caused many others to collapse. **B,L,D.**

May 29: Saturday. Tehran. Morning drive to a small village called Abyaneh. Walking through the narrow streets it really does feel as if you have stepped back in time. The women here are well covered, but are not dressed in the typical sober colors. Their textiles are colorful and patterned, their skirts flared and they seem to continue their lives independently of the central government.

The men wear black trousers made from yards of fabric and most of them are involved in agriculture and farming.

Continue on to the oasis town of Kashan stopping en route at some extraordinary private homes which have been left empty but which are currently being restored. Admire the beautiful stucco domes, the fine wall paintings and the in-laid mirror work. Kashan is the epitome of everything that is typically Persian from its mosques, caravanserais and stately gardens, to its carpets, ceramics and delicate embroideries. The water of Kashan comes from the system of ghanats which one can see all over Iran. This rather extraordinary system of irrigation which can extend for miles relies on underground water channels (the ghanat). A well is built down to an underground water source, which at times can be over 300 feet deep, but must be at a higher level than the point at which the water is to be collected. Then a tunnel is dug which carries the water at a very low gradient to that point. One sees them, still active, all over Iran.

In Kashan, the cool water flows abundantly through marble channels all the way to the gardens of Fin built by Shah Abbas I. He had pleasure pavilions decorated here in the same extravagant style as the palaces of Isfahan. After visiting the Fin Gardens, continue on to the site of Sialk. The two large mounds here were excavated by the French Archaeological Service in the 1930's and the site has revealed numerous pieces and varieties of pottery, and domestic implements of clay, stone and bone from as early as the fourth century B.C. It appears to have been sacked and deserted in the eighth century B.C. You can still see the outline of various mud-brick buildings and a large number of potsherds embedded throughout the two mounds.

Return to Tehran where rooms have been reserved until departure past mid-night this evening.
Laleh Hotel. B,L,D.

May 30: Sunday. Depart Tehran arriving back in the United States today.

Trip Price based on a minimum of twenty paying travelers: \$4,750 plus airfare

Single room supplement: \$880

Includes:

1. Accommodation, based on double occupancy, in hotels as listed
2. Three meals daily with water and soft-drinks included and water on the bus at all times
3. The following flights: Tehran/Shiraz: Shiraz/Isfahan
4. All sightseeing and excursions in a private air-conditioned bus
5. All entrance fees listed
6. Services of an English-speaking local guide who will travel with the group in Iran and services of local guides in Shiraz and Isfahan
7. Lectures by Dr. Ricks and tour administration by Carla Thorson, VP WAC No. Calif.
8. Gratuities to all staff and portorage
9. Pre-trip reading materials

Not included:

1. International airfare to and from Iran
2. Visa fee for Iran which is currently \$91 a person
3. Excess luggage charges
4. Travel Insurance – WAC sells Travel Insurance Services
5. Items of a purely personal nature
6. Any item not listed

Cancellation Penalties: Your deposit is refundable up to 90 days prior to departure less a \$400 per person administration fee. Final payment due 90 days prior to departure. Cancellation between 89 days and 60 days, 75% trip cost penalty. Between 59 days and trip departure, no refund.

Upon Receipt of Deposit, we will provide you with travel insurance, a traveler registration form and release waiver which contains terms and conditions which we require you to read, complete the information section and sign. Upon request, we would be happy to provide these to you prior to your sending a deposit.

Currently there is a State Dept. travel warning for Iran. Distant Horizons has operated many trips to Iran and has not encountered any hostility towards American travelers. Indeed travelers are likely to be received with hospitality and warmth. To read the warning visit:http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/tw/tw_920.html

If you have an Israeli stamp in your passport, you will need to obtain a new one. Make sure your passport is valid for six months beyond the end of the Iran trip.

Reservation form for Iran. Please return with a \$500 per person deposit made out to **Distant Horizons** to:
World Affairs Council of Philadelphia Outside Philadelphia area call 800-942-5004 x. 209 or 217
One South Broad Street, Suite 2M, Philadelphia, PA 19107 Locally: 215-561-4700 E-mail:
travel@wacphila.org. **May 19-30, 2010**

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Email: _____ Phone: _____

Single Twin

I will be sharing with: _____ I would like a roommate:* Yes No (Circle one)

Enclosed is my deposit for \$ _____

PAYMENTS BY CHECK ONLY

I am a member of the _____ Council.

*(We will try and find a roommate, however, if we cannot you must pay the single supplement.)

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