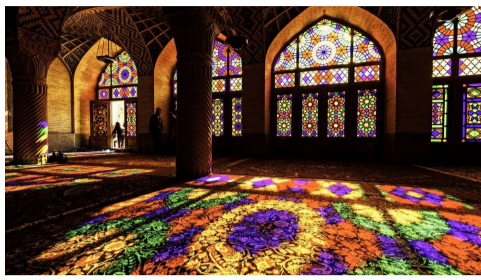




# OTTOMAN & PERSIAN WONDERS, (IIAN)

Ashgabat to Istanbul 31 Days, departing 13th September 2021



## TRIP OVERVIEW

**Trip Style:** Overlanding

**Route:** Ashgabat to Istanbul

**Duration:** 31 Days

**Transport:** Overland Expedition Vehicle

**Accommodation:** Comfortable Hotel 8 nights  
Basic Hotel 12 nights  
Guesthouse 2 nights  
Camping without facilities 2 nights  
Multishare Hostel 5 nights  
Camping 1 night

**Meals:** Breakfasts x 14, Lunches x 3, Dinners x 3

**Physical Challenge:** ● ● ○ ○ ○

Your itinerary may include easy-paced day walks, bike rides, and other activities that are not too strenuous.

**Lifestyle Challenge:** ● ● ● ○ ○

This trip has a bit of everything. Some areas that you travel through may be physically challenging; for example you may be at altitude some of the time and you may be camping for several nights. The pace of the trip can be tiring at times and some facilities will be basic. However there will also be plenty of time to relax and some comfortable accommodation.



# DAILY ITINERARY

## Day 1 - Ashgabat (13th September 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast

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### Border Information:

if joining in Ashgabat, you will most likely enter Turkmenistan at Ashgabat International Airport (IATA code: ASB).

There will be a pre-departure meeting at 10:00am - please look out for a note from your leader at the reception of the joining hotel upon arrival with more details about this important meeting.

After the meeting we will have an included tour of the city of Ashgabat using local minibuses. In the afternoon we will visit the famous Ashgabat Sunday Market.

Please note that many of the options listed below will only be possible for those with extra time in Ashgabat before the start of your trip with us - please contact the Sales team if you would like to book pre-tour accommodation with us to have extra time exploring Ashgabat. If arriving at Ashgabat airport you will also need to have a confirmed arrival transfer and representative from our local supplier to meet you at the airport. Please contact your sales agent for prices and to book.

\*Important note - any tobacco products are practically illegal in Turkmenistan, so please do not bring them or use them in Turkmenistan. Also please do not bring any medicines containing tramadol, codeine, temazepam, morphine or opiates to Central Asia. These are illegal in all circumstances in most of Central Asia and you will risk arrest. If in doubt about a particular medicine, please do not bring it. See the notes at the bottom for more details.\*

Accommodation: Ak Altyn Hotel A""

## Day 2 - Ashgabat (14th September 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast

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Today we will arrange to obtain our Iran visas at the Iranian Consulate in Ashgabat for all members of the group - please note that citizens of the UK, USA and Canada will need to attend the Consulate in person along with your trip leader so that they can take fingerprints as part of the application.

The rest of the day is free to further explore Ashgabat.

## Day 3 - Shirvan (15th September 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast

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**Border Information:** Exit Turkmenistan at Gaudan, enter Iran at Bajgiran.

Today we will pick up our passports from the Iranian Consulate and head straight across the border to the small town of Shirvan.

In Shirvan we will stay in a basic local hotel.

## Day 4 - Damghan (16th September 2021)

Today we will drive to the historical town of Bastam and visit the Sufi complex in the centre. After this we will continue to the town of Damghan.

In Damghan we will stay in a local hotel.

## Day 5 - Khor (17th September 2021)

This morning we will take a walking tour of the ancient town of Damghan, including the Tarikhuneh Mosque which features columns dating from the year 760CE.

Following our visit we will continue our journey to the desert city of Khor, where we have the option to take an evening jeep trip into the nearby salt flats to have dinner.

In Khor we will stay in a beautiful hotel in the style of a desert caravanserai.

*\*Please note that with small groups and at certain times of the year we may be able to stay in a local homestay in the nearby village of Mesr\*.*

## Day 6 - Yazd (18th September 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast

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Today we will explore the town of Khor before driving to the ancient desert town of Yazd, one of the oldest extant towns in Iran.

On the following day we will have an included walking tour of some of the main highlights of Yazd, including the incredible Jameh Mosque, the Old Town and the Amir Chakhmaq complex.

In Yazd we will stay in a local hotel.

### Day 7 - Yazd (19th September 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast

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After breakfast we will have an included walking tour of some of the main highlights of Yazd, including the incredible Jameh Mosque, the Old Town and the Amir Chakhmaq complex.

### Day 8 - Zein-o-din (20th September 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast

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Today we have an included visit to two important Zoroastrian sites in Iran - the Fire Temple and the Towers of Silence. After this we will take a short drive to the famous Caravanserai of Zein-o-Din, an atmospheric 16th-century guesthouse originally built to accommodate merchants travelling on the Silk Road.

In Zein-o-Din we will stay overnight at the old caravanserai.

### Day 9 - Shiraz (21st September 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast

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Today we will drive south to the city of Shiraz. En route we will visit the phenomenal ancient ruins of Persepolis, once the capital of the mighty Achaemenid Persian Empire until it was conquered by Alexander the Great in 330BCE.

### Day 10 - Shiraz (22nd September 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast

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Today we will have an included walking tour of some of the highlights of the old city of Shiraz, including the beautifully-coloured Nasir ol Molk Mosque, the incredible mirrored interior of the Shah Cheragh Mosque, and the historical house of Narenjestan.

### Day 11 - Esfahan (23rd September 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast

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Today we will have a full day's drive to the stunning old Safavid-era capital of Esfahan.

On the following day we will have an included walking tour of the central highlights of Esfahan, including the showpiece central square of Naqsh-e Jahan and its surrounding mosques and royal palaces, the old bazaar, and the beautiful Jameh Mosque, one of the oldest in Iran.

On our second full day here, we will have free time to explore more of Esfahan's incredible sites, such as its ancient bridges, the curious 'Shaking Minarets', the Armenian Vank Cathedral, or the evocative Martyrs' Cemetery.

### Day 12 - Esfahan (24th September 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast

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This morning we will have an included walking tour of the central highlights of Esfahan, including the showpiece central square of Naqsh-e Jahan and its surrounding mosques and royal palaces, the old bazaar, and the beautiful Jameh Mosque, one of the oldest in Iran.

### Day 13 - Esfahan (25th September 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast

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Today is our last day in Esfahan. We will have free time to explore more of Esfahan's incredible sites, such as its ancient bridges, the curious 'Shaking Minarets', the Armenian Vank Cathedral, or the evocative Martyrs' Cemetery.

### Day 14 - Tehran (26th September 2021)

Today we will have a full day drive to the chaotic Iranian capital of Tehran.

## Day 15 - Tehran (27th September 2021)

Border Information: if joining in Tehran, you will most likely enter Iran at Tehran Imam Khomeini International Airport (IATA code: IKA).

There will be a pre-departure meeting at 10:00am - please look out for a note from your leader at the reception of the joining hotel upon arrival with more details about this important meeting.

After the meeting we will have an included tour of the stunning Golestan Palace and the fascinating National Museum of Iran.

*Please note that due to restrictions on citizens of the UK, USA and Canada being permitted to remain unaccompanied in Iran, we would only be able to book one extra night of accommodation in Tehran for these nationalities before the trip starts. You will also be required to book an airport transfer in advance via your sales agent. Please ensure the correct dates for your plans are clearly stated on all your visa applications.*

## Day 16 - Zanjan (28th September 2021)

Today we will set off from Iran's chaotic capital and head west to the impressive Dome of Soltaniyeh, where we have an included visit. The 14th-century mausoleum is the 3rd largest dome in the world.

After our visit, we will continue our drive to the small town of Zanjan, where we have free time to explore and possibly visit the fascinating historical laundry hall of Rakhathshor-Khaneh.

## Day 17 - Tabriz (29th September 2021)

Today we will drive to the western Iranian city of Tabriz, where we will have free time to explore some of the sights of the old town.

## Day 18 - Dogubayazit (30th September 2021)

Border Information: Exit Iran at Bazargan, enter Turkey at Gurbulak.

Today we will drive across the border to Turkey and the Kurdish town of Doğubayazit. En route we will have an included visit to the Ishak Pasha Palace and enjoy the spectacular views of the surrounding landscapes and the nearby Mount Ararat.

## Day 19 - Lake Nemrut (1st October 2021)

**Meals:** Lunch, Dinner

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Today is a drive day as we travel through the stunning landscapes in eastern Turkey towards the central Cappadocia region. We will aim to overnight close to Lake Nemrut this evening.

## Day 20 - Mount Nemrut (2nd October 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

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Another full drive day today however we will be rewarded with a beautiful campsite near Mt Nemrut at the end of the day with a bit of time to relax and enjoy the evening.

## Day 21 - Goreme (3rd October 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast

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Today we will complete our drive to Göreme, a small enchanting town in the heart of the Cappadocia mountains.

In Göreme we will stay 2 nights here in a well-equipped hostel - please note that dorm beds are sometimes used here.

## Day 22 - Goreme (4th October 2021)

One the second day we will explore Goreme, including a guided tour of the enchanted valley of Cappadocia. There will also be an opportunity for a magical optional balloon ride over the valley during your time here (weather permitting).

## Day 23 - Egirdir (5th October 2021)

After breakfast we will continue south towards the town of Egirdir, today will mostly be a travel day.

## Day 24 - Olympos (6th October 2021)

This morning we will continue onto the ancient beach town of Olympos on the Southern Turkish coast.

On the way we will make a small detour to visit the ancient city of Termessos in Gulluk Dagi National Park.

### Day 25 - Olympos (7th October 2021)

Today there will be plenty of time to explore and participate in optional activities, in the evening we will walk up to the Chimera Fire Mountain and toast some marshmallows.

### Day 26 - Pamukkale (8th October 2021)

**Meals:** Lunch, Dinner

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Today we will head back inland to the small village of Pamukkale. Either this afternoon or tomorrow morning we will have time to visit the thermal hot springs and traverse the travertine pools and terraces.

### Day 27 - Selcuk (9th October 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast

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We only have a short drive this morning to make it to our next destination Selcuk where we will have two nights. On arrival we will have free time to explore the local area or simply relax in one of the many cafes or tea bars which are great for people watching.

### Day 28 - Selcuk (10th October 2021)

Today we will spend the day exploring the Ephesus Ruins and Terraced Houses.

### Day 29 - Gallipoli (11th October 2021)

After breakfast we will leave Selcuk and drive to Halki following the coast. Here we will have an included tour of the Troy Ruins.

In the afternoon we will cross the Dardanelles by ferry to arrive into Ecebat where we will stay the night in a local hostel.

### Day 30 - Istanbul (12th October 2021)

Rising early we will have an included tour of Gallipoli with our local guide. After lunch we will then jump on the truck one last time to make our way to the bustling city of Istanbul.

### Day 31 - Istanbul (13th October 2021)

Border information: if leaving the trip in Istanbul, you will most likely exit Turkey from Istanbul Atatürk International Airport (IATA code: IST).

Today will be free to explore the many sights of the incredible exotic city of Istanbul, including the Grand Bazaar, the Bosphorus River and the phenomenal Blue Mosque and Hagia Sophia!

Today is the end day for passengers finishing their trip in Istanbul. Please note there is no accommodation included on the trip tonight - please contact your sales agent if you are interested in booking extra nights of accommodation in order to fully explore and take part in some of the optional activities listed.

Accommodation:

## ITINERARY DISCLAIMER

The routes, activities and places visited described in these notes are intentions and are meant as a rough guide only. By their very nature, overland itineraries need to be flexible and the regions that we are travelling through are often unpredictable. We intend to follow the planned route but exact night stops and inclusions cannot be guaranteed and it sometimes happens that we decide to make a change to our planned itinerary. This may be for a variety of reasons; climatic, road or bureaucratic conditions may demand it. Changes to the itinerary may occur with little notice so please be prepared for modifications to your trip.

#### Drive Times

Drive times are listed in the day-to-day itinerary. These are the approximate number of hours that the vehicle will be in motion, and does not include any time taken for coffee or lunch stops, border crossings, photo stops, activities en route, comfort breaks, shopping stops, toilet stops, etc. The times given are approximate estimates only and whilst given with the best of intentions, the drive times are heavily dependent on traffic, road conditions, weather, police roadblocks, and many other factors.

#### Accommodation and Meals Included

The type of accommodation and included meals are listed for each day of the itinerary. These listings show our intention and on most departures the listings will be accurate. However due to the flexible nature of overland itineraries, climatic, bureaucratic or road conditions may demand changes to our listed intentions or groups may simply decide to amend the plans from time to time.

## Optional Activities

A selection of optional activities is listed in the day-to-day itinerary. This list is designed to be a helpful guide as to what is commonly available in each location, and is neither an exhaustive list, a guarantee that the activity is available, or an endorsement or recommendation. Certain activities may not be available on your particular visit and it may not be possible to do all the activities listed in the time available at each destination. It is recommended to give yourself extra time in your joining or ending city if you would like to participate in some optional activities there. Prices listed are for entrance only and do not include transport costs to and from the sites or local guides unless indicated. The prices are displayed according to our latest information and in the best faith, but prices do fluctuate due to exchange rates, season, numbers of participants, and simple increases from the operator, and therefore any prices listed are a guide only and cannot be guaranteed. If you partake in any optional activities, you do so at your own risk and it must be clearly understood that your participation is your own decision and does not form part of your contract with Dragoman. You may be required to sign/complete a waiver form or optional activity form for some optional activities. For more information around activity safety and insurance, please see the Essential Information document.

## EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION

In the event of a real emergency once you have left your home country, please contact us on our out of office hours number. If you cannot get through on the phone, please leave a message with your name, reference number, contact details and a message with the help that you need and we will get back to you. Please bear in mind that real progress or action may not be possible until normal office hours, depending on the issue.

If your flight is delayed, please inform us as soon as you can and then make your way to the joining hotel as instructed in the Joining Point section of these notes.

**Out of hours Number: +44 (0) 7985 106564**

## A FEW RULES

We expect all group members to act respectfully towards our staff and other group members. Bullying will not be tolerated.

Engaging in commercial or exploitative sexual activities, committing acts of violence or threatening violence towards local people, other group members or any member of our staff is not allowed. Any customer engaging in such activities will be required to leave the trip immediately with no refund of the trip price.

You must at all times comply with the laws, customs, foreign exchange and drug regulations of all countries visited and conduct yourself in accordance with our responsible travel policy. Any customer found contravening such laws or regulations will be required to leave the trip immediately with no refund of the trip price.

Although we are aware that in some parts of the world taking, carrying or selling drugs, or carrying weapons may be legal, it is not acceptable for Dragoman customers and our tour leaders have the right to ask you to leave the trip immediately with no refund of the trip price if you are found to be engaging in such activities.

## ISSUES ON THE TRIP

While we always endeavour to provide the best possible holiday experience, due to the nature of travel and the areas we visit sometimes things can and do go wrong. Should any issue occur while you are on your trip, it is imperative that you discuss this with your group leader or our local partner straight away so that they can do their best to rectify the problem and save any potential negative impact on the rest of your trip.

We recognise that there may be times when your group leader may not be able to resolve a situation to your satisfaction. If this is the case please contact our customer relations department on [customer-relations@dragoman.co.uk](mailto:customer-relations@dragoman.co.uk).

You may also choose to provide details in your feedback questionnaire which we ask you to complete at the end of your trip, but we do ask you to be aware that it is very difficult for us to provide any practical help after the trip is complete.

## IMPORTANT NOTES

### OVERLANDING LIFESTYLE

Dragoman was founded in 1981, and has had many years of experience of leading overland trips across 4 continents. Overlanding is all about sharing a great travelling experience with like-minded people. On your trip you'll travel in one of Dragoman's purpose-built iconic expedition vehicles on an off-the-beaten-track adventure along rugged roads, experiencing the sights, sounds and smells of the world up-close. Your journey will be overland, sometimes across vast distances, so some long days spent driving are inevitable - but these will be interspersed with breaks of a day or two at a destination or activity.

On an overland journey, you are more than just a passenger and everyone gets involved setting up camp - we supply the tent but it's up to you to pitch it! As part of your trip, you will be assigned a truck job which could be collecting firewood or water, luggage loading, organising food, stores, etc. Like all great adventures, the more you put in the more you'll get out! For more details of how an overlanding trip works, please see the Essential Information document.

## SAFETY STANDARDS

We run adventure journeys in off the beaten track areas, which often have poor infrastructure. You should expect that some of these areas do not adhere to 'Western' safety standards. For more information, please see the Essential Information document

## MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN REMOTE AREAS

We will be travelling to areas in remote locations where medical assistance will not be available, and communications may be sparse. We do not carry satellite phones on our regular trips. Therefore, if you have a medical condition such as a heart condition that would put you at risk, we would suggest that this is not the trip for you. Also, please be aware that should an emergency occur, there is likely to be a considerable delay in accessing medical care, and by joining our trip you accept this risk.

## VISAS, HEALTH, INSURANCE & MONEY

Before you travel there are vital things to consider such as:

- Any visas needed for your trip
- Any vaccinations needed (please consult your GP or travel clinic)
- Organising your local payment (the kitty)
- Buying travel insurance (insurance is compulsory to be allowed to join our trips)

For more information on these topics, please see the Essential Information Document.

## EXPLORATORY TRIP WARNING - THIS IS A NEW TRIP FOR US!

Please note that all or part of this trip is a brand new itinerary, and is going through completely new areas for Dragoman. This is what we call an Exploratory trip, and it means that all the passengers on this trip will be the route's pioneers for the first season!

While we have thoroughly researched all aspects of this new route and put the itinerary together with the best of intentions, please note that your crew will be finding a lot of information out for us on the ground and will be playing a lot of things by ear. The itinerary may be altered in places where it becomes necessary and the drive times may differ significantly from the published estimates.

Most Exploratory trips will have slight or significant changes made to them after this first season, and frankly we would be very surprised if an Exploratory trip was to run perfectly to the published itinerary. Usually we find that this is rarely a problem but rather an exciting feature and that there are much more pleasant surprises in store than unpleasant ones. You will be immersing in to the camaraderie with your crew and fellow travellers and give you the fantastic opportunity to shape the trip as a group.

However, the warning is sincere and this trip must be viewed as Exploratory - if this concerns you or you would rather stick to a tried-and-tested itinerary, then we recommend that you wait a year or two until we have this itinerary perfected following operating it many times, or of course to consider one of the more established trips in our extensive portfolio.

There will be numerous challenges on this trip including border delays, visa and paperwork delays, potential re-routing at short notice, lack of western facilities, road closures and other obstacles and unforeseen issues.

There is a risk of cancellation if the FCDO advise changes (as of now the route is safe to travel all the way through).

West and Central Africa will test everyone's patience due to potential issues with obtaining visas. This is likely to lead to long delays in places where there may not be much to do. It may also be necessary to fly over some places which would be at your own expense.

This trip will have a higher level of participation compared to our other Dragoman trips and you will be required to help out with setting up camps, cooking etc. The campsites are also likely to be basic for much of the trip along with a high number of bush camps.

This will be a challenging trip and you must be fit in order to participate. If you have a pre-existing medical condition or any medical concerns you should check with your doctor prior to travel that this would be a suitable trip for you. You should also be aware that in the event of accident or illness, access to medical centres will be limited.

On the flip side, we'll be visiting regions and areas very rarely seen by Western travellers. Meeting people who have perhaps never seen foreigners. Enjoying the chaotic and buzzing cultures of West and Central Africa. And of course, the immense satisfaction of completing a classic adventure that only a handful of people ever get the chance to complete.

## VERY IMPORTANT NOTICE ABOUT MEDICATIONS IN CENTRAL ASIA

Please note that as of 2014 all medications containing **tramadol, codeine, temazepam, morphine, opiates or any containing similar constituent components** have been made illegal in Georgia, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. This includes many over-the-counter medicines that are commonly available elsewhere, such as Nurofen! Please see here for more information - <http://sambuh.com/procedure-psychotropic-substances.html>

It is very important that you do not bring any such medications as the customs officials will treat this as though you were trying to bring illegal narcotics into the country. The rules are strict; it does not matter if you are only transiting through, and it makes no difference if you have a prescription or a doctor's note. Please do not bring these medications to Central Asia under any circumstance. The consequences could be huge, not only for yourself but for the tour leaders, for Dragoman's future operation in the region and especially for our local agents and guides.

Please note that we cannot allow you to travel on a Central Asia trip if you refuse to dispose of such medicines or refuse to co-operate with the tour leaders if they need to inspect any personal medicines. Thank you for your understanding in this matter.

If you have any prescription medications that do not come under the above list, please bring the prescription along and declare the medicines on any customs declaration forms throughout your trip.

## TURKMENISTAN NOTES

### TURKMENISTAN NOTE

Please note that any additional accommodation in Turkmenistan must be booked through Dragoman due to the strict controls on foreigners in the country - it is essential that everyone is registered immediately upon their entry to Turkmenistan at accommodation booked by the agent on your visa Letter of Invitation, as such it is not possible to independently arrange your own accommodation here. It is also now compulsory for all passengers arriving into Turkmenistan through Ashgabat airport to be met on arrival by an official representative from our local supplier and have a confirmed transfer to their hotel. These transfers can be booked directly through your sales agent. If you do not have a confirmed transfer upon arrival you may be refused entry into Turkmenistan.

Due to strict Turkmenistan Laws, foreigners are not permitted to travel outside of Ashgabat without being accompanied by an official guide from a registered company. If travelling on a Dragoman Trip and you wish to explore Turkmenistan further any additional time must be booked through our registered supplier as a private tour and we must be notified at the time of booking as it is not possible to travel with 2 different company's in the same visit. Any Additional nights in Turkmenistan must also be booked at a registered hotel in Ashgabat.

Please also note that there are strict laws against tobacco products in Turkmenistan. Whilst it is not yet completely illegal to possess tobacco, it is strictly prohibited to smoke in any public place, is illegal to sell tobacco, and is illegal to import more than 2 small packs of cigarettes. Breaking these laws even slightly can lead to large fines and even detention in jail. To be safe, it is highly recommended to simply not bring any tobacco products into Turkmenistan and avoiding their use entirely until you have left the country. All the above also applies to vaping, e-cigarettes, etc. Your crew may insist on such material being disposed of before entering through the country on the overland truck, and your co-operation with this is both appreciated and expected.

## IRAN NOTES

### IRAN NOTE

Alcohol and pork products are strictly forbidden in Iran and will be confiscated at customs by anyone attempting to bring it into the country. Please do not try to bring alcohol into the country under any circumstances - your leader will ask you to dispose of it before heading to the border.

Iran is a conservative Islamic nation and a strict dress code is enforced throughout the country. Any deviation from the dress code may have you refused entry at the border, or in trouble with the police or locals once inside the country.

Men must wear long trousers at all times - ankles must be covered, but short sleeved shirts are acceptable. Open-toe sandals are fine to wear for both men and women.

Women are required by law to wear long, loose-fitting clothing in public. You must also wear a headscarf (any colour you like, though you will find that local women usually prefer black) in public. There is no rule of the colour of your outfit as long as it is modest and includes a headscarf. Generally female travellers can wear the loose fitting long-sleeved shirts available in many Asian shops that reach down to the thighs - any type of trousers underneath is allowed as long as they cover your ankles. Women are able to wear open-toed shoes and sandals as long as their ankles are not showing.

Please note that any British, US or Canadian citizens that are flying into Tehran to start the trip will need to book an arrival transfer in advance, and this must be done through us according to Iranian law. We strongly recommend that people of these nationalities aim to arrive on the start date of the trip, but if you require pre-tour accommodation in Tehran this must be booked through us and only a maximum of one night can be applied for. All the above also applies to all British, US or Canadian citizens who are leaving in Tehran - you will need to book an airport transfer through us and only a maximum of one night of post-trip accommodation can be applied for if needed.

## TURKEY NOTES

Please ensure you have an up to date version of these notes. **These notes were printed on the 21st June 2021**