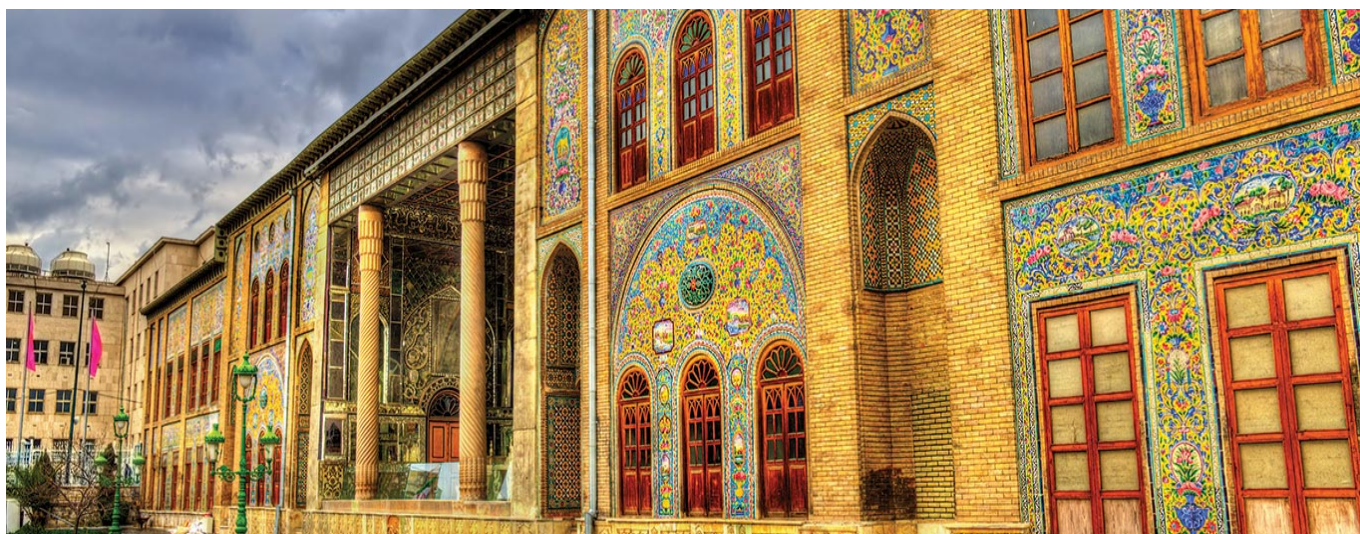




## Iran, the Jewel of the Silk Road - 19 Days – 18 Nights

| Day      | Destination     |
|----------|-----------------|
| 2 Nights | Tehran, Iran    |
| 1 Night  | Kashan, Iran    |
| 2 Nights | Isfahan, Iran   |
| 2 Nights | Shiraz, Iran    |
| 1 Nights | Rafsanjan, Iran |
| 2 Nights | Kerman, Iran    |
| 1 Nights | Yazd, Iran      |
| 1 Nights | Khur, Iran      |
| 1 Nights | Ferdows, Iran   |
| 1 Night  | Torbat, Iran    |
| 1 Night  | Mashhad, Iran   |
| 1 Night  | Sabzevar, Iran  |
| 1 Night  | Damghan, Iran   |
| 1 Night  | Tehran, Iran    |

**Day 1: Day 1: Tehran**

Welcome to Iran! Transfer to the hotel. In the afternoon (variable schedule based on arrival flights), we will begin the visit to TEHRAN, the capital of the country, a modern city with almost ten million inhabitants. We enter the Tajrish Bazar, a small and active bazaar full of activity and life. Inside we visit the Imamzadeh Saleh Sanctuary, one of the most popular Shiite shrines in Iran, magnificent blue architecture, dedicated to a descendant of the prophet. Tehran is on the slope of the Alborz Mountain range, some peaks exceed 5000 meters, and at its foot – on the edge of Tehran – is DARBAND VILLAGE, with its mountain atmosphere, its waterfalls, its green paths, its numerous Tea houses and its restaurants. Dinner included.

Note: If the arrival time of your flight is after 5 p.m., you will not be able to attend the activities planned for this day.

Overnight Stay at Hotel.

## **Day 2: Day 2: Tehran**

We include a visit (with guide and tickets included) to the great metropolis. We begin by going to the 437 meters high MILAD TOWER, its views are impressive (if it's a foggy day with low visibility, instead of the Milad Tower we will go to the Azadi Tower). We visit the National Museum, the largest historical and archaeological museum in the country, where we can learn more about this land, the cradle of civilizations. Afterwards, we visit the Golestan Palace, declared a world heritage site by UNESCO, a site of palaces and gardens which construction began in the 16th century. Lunch included.

In the afternoon, we will visit the National Jewelry Museum, property of the central bank, an amazing collection of precious stones and metals, highlighting the "peacock throne" and the "earth globe". Free time; we will drop you off in the Grand Bazaar area, with its many covered streets, alleys and hundreds of shops.

Overnight Stay at Hotel.

Note: Sometimes the jewelry museum is not open, in that case, we would visit the carpet museum that shows Persian carpets, some from the 16th century.

## **Day 3: Day 3: TEHRAN - MAUSOLEUM OF RUHOLLAH KHOMEINI - KASHAN**

After breakfast, on the outskirts of Tehran, we visit the Mausoleum-Shrine of Imam Khomeini, considered the founder of the Islamic Republic and whose construction began in 1989 after his death. The immense complex of over 20 square kilometers is a cultural and tourist center that also houses a seminary and a university of Islamic studies. We continue to QOM, the provincial capital and one of the holiest Shiite

religious centers in the Islamic world that houses the Mausoleum of Fatima Masuma, sister of the eighth Shiite Imam, Imam Reza. Tens of thousands of pilgrims visit Qom every year. Qom is known for being a major center of Shia Islamic studies and is home to numerous religious schools and seminaries, as well as Al-Mustafa Islamic University, which attracts students from all over the world. Accompanied by an Islamic scholar we will visit the sacred mausoleum (courtyards and outdoor areas) and he will introduce us to Islam in its Shiite branch, enveloping us in the atmosphere of this holy place. After that, we'll visit Imam Khomeini's house. Free time in the city's bazaar, with its many shops specializing in prayer and religious objects. Lunch included. In the afternoon we continue to Kashan making a stop, before entering the city, at the Fin Garden, wonderful gardens dating back to the sixteenth century, declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO, in an area of thermal springs and surrounded by a wall. We'll stroll through the gardens, the palace and the baths. We continue to KASHAN, a pleasant city whose historic center, with numerous monuments and historic adobe houses, are of great beauty. Free time in the historic center, with a lively tourist life.

Overnight Stay on the Cruise.

#### **Day 4: Day 4: KASHAN - NUSHABAD UNDERGROUND CITY - ABOUZEID CARAVANASERAI - ABYANEH- ISFAHAN**

In the morning we begin the visit of Kashan, where we visit the Agha Bozorg mosque/madrassa, a beautiful and original construction. The ground floor is occupied by the madrasa and the upper floor by the great mosque that reminds us of the constructions made by the Persians in India. The center of Kashan has several ancient houses/palaces; We will visit one of them, the Boroujerdi house-museum, from the nineteenth century, where we will be amazed by its mural paintings, in which the rich merchant who built it wanted to show the places he had visited, and the ventilation system to give freshness to the palace in the summer. We will also enter the hammam "soltan bath", with its blue tiles it is one of the most beautiful historical baths in Iran. Flower drinks are typical in Kashan, so to get to know them, we will visit one of the factories-shops of these unique flower drinks, see how they are made and have a delicious tasting.

After that, we head to the outskirts of the city where the great archaeological site of TAPPEH SIALK is located. We will be impressed to learn that there existed here a civilization, the Elamite, highly developed 7,500 years ago, one of the first of humanity.

We continue to NOUSH ABAD, where the "underground city" is located, a complex of tunnels and galleries built more than 1500 years ago to protect against invasions. Our route continues south, making a stop at ABOUZEYDABAD, an old restored caravanserai very close to desert dunes. Traditional lunch included. In the afternoon, among the mountains, we visit ABYANEH, one of the most charming villages in Iran, in a valley 2500 meters above sea level. Its cool climate, red clay houses, its own cultural traditions (including an ancient dialect and traditional dress) and its mausoleum will leave us with very pleasant memories.

Arrival at ISFAHAN at the end of the day. We are in a city with an impressive architectural and cultural heritage: mosques, palaces, bridges and bazaars with delicious handicrafts. This city, inhabited for more than 5000 years, was the capital of the Persian Empire. Upon arrival, we'll take a walk across the historic Si-O-Se Pol Bridge, "the bridge of thirty-three arches" illuminated.

Overnight Stay at the Hotel.

## **Day 5: Day 5 - ISFAHAN**

After breakfast we begin the visit of ISFAHAN, the main tourist destination of Iran, the third city of the country. We start by walking through the Armenian quarter; This community has lived here for centuries and has always been respected. We walk through its quiet streets and visit the cathedral (Kelisa-ye Vank), a small museum that allows us to learn about Armenian culture and history. We also visit the 17th century Bethlehem Church with its impressive frescoes. Afterwards we head to the historic center, making a first stop at the Jame Mosque, the largest mosque in Iran that still celebrates worship and we get emotional in its immense courtyard when we hear the call to prayer. This mosque has been declared a World Heritage Site. We continue to the main square of the city, Naghsh Jahan, one of the largest public squares in the world with more than half a kilometer in length, declared a World Heritage Site, and where the "three powers" are located: the political, with the Ali Qapu Palace that we will enter to see its view over the square; the commercial, with probably the best bazaar in Iran to buy handicrafts; and the religious one, with two mosques in the square. We visit the Imam Mosque, built 400 years ago with its various sections and blue tiles. Inside the venue, we meet with an imam who will talk to us about Islam and will be able to guide us in our doubts. Lunch included. In the afternoon, we visit the Chehel Sotun Palace, with its fountains, gardens, paintings and public bath. We also include the entrance to the Museum of Music, a small museum that shows us how Persia was the cradle of many of the instruments that are played today and we will attend a small concert of traditional Persian music to discover the great beauty of Iranian music. Free time at the bazaar.

Overnight Stay at Hotel.

## **Day 6: Day 6 - ISFAHAN- IZADKHAHAST – QALAT - SHIRAZ**

After breakfast, we continue south, through arid landscapes. We make a stop in IZADKHAHAST, a small town with mud-brick architecture, with its old quarter, its ruined castle and its caravanserai. We continue to QALAT, in the mountains, a charming town with stone houses, where a Christian community lives; we will visit its small church and have lunch (included). Arrival in SHIRAZ in the middle of the afternoon. We are at the center of Persian culture, inhabited for more than 4000 years. A city of nightingales and poets, it was the capital of Persia in the 18th century. In the afternoon we will visit 2 of the mausoleums of the great names of Persian literature born in Shiraz, the gardens and the mausoleum of Hafez of Shiraz, a

Sufi poet and mystic of the fourteenth century and who today is still one of the most beloved figures by the Iranian people, who memorize his verses or seek advice in his texts and the gardens and mausoleum of Saadi, another great Persian poet of the medieval period of deep sensitivity.

Overnight Stay at Hotel.

## **Day 7: Day 7 - SHIRAZ**

After breakfast, we will leave Shiraz to visit, 60 km away, the most impressive archaeological site in Iran: PERSEPOLIS. This World Heritage Site was built 2700 years ago to be the capital of the Achaemenid empire. Its stone palaces, its carvings showing historical and ritual scenes, as well as details about the kings and the court, show us one of the first great cultures of humanity. Nearby we will visit Naghsh Rostam, the cemetery of the emperors with their tombs in the stone. After the visit, we'll return to Shiraz, where we'll visit the Nasir Almoluk Mosque (Pink Mosque) to admire the light filtering through the colorful stained glass windows, the Naranjistan Qavam Garden, and the Zandyeh compound, which includes the Vakil Bazaar, Saray-e Moshir, Vakil Mosque, Vakil Bath, and Karim Khan Citadel.

We will return to the hotel for a short break and before heading out for dinner with a local family in their home (Note: if there is a case this is not possible, a dinner in a restaurant with live music will be included).

Overnight Stay at Hotel.

## **Day 8: Day 8 - SHIRAZ- PASARGADAE - MEYMAND - RAFSANJAN**

We head towards the east of the country, mountains, agricultural areas and deserts on our route. We will visit PASARGAD, another impressive archaeological site declared a World Heritage Site, built 2600 years ago, where the mausoleum of Cyrus the Great is located. We will continue to MEYMAND, a stunning troglodyte village in the desert, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Meymand is believed to have been one of the oldest residences in Iran, dating back 12,000 years. Many of the inhabitants live in the 350 houses carved by hand among the rocks. Lunch included. After lunch we continue our route to RAFSANJAN, a small town in the desert whose history dates back thousands of years and which today is one of the largest pistachio production centers in the world. We will be able to see its beautiful "wind towers" that help keep homes cool since ancient times.

Overnight Stay at Hotel.

## **Day 9: Day 9 - RAFSANJAN- MAHAN- KERMAN**

We continue our route through deserts to MAHAN, a quiet town famous for the mausoleum of a well-known dervish, mystic and poet of the 15th century. Later we will visit BAGH SHAZDEH, a beautiful garden with springs and green trees in the middle of the desert declared a World Heritage Site. Arrival in the provincial capital of KERMAN. We are in a religious and conservative city that also has a Zoroastrian minority. We visit the Ganjali Khan enclosure, where the magnificent bazaar, the cistern and the old baths and caravanserai are located. Lunch included. In the afternoon, we'll visit the Fathabad Garden, a historic garden in the middle of the desert on the outskirts of Kerman.

Overnight Stay at Hotel.

## **Day 10: Day 10 - KERMAN- ZEIN-O-DIN CARAVANSERAI - SAR YAZD - YAZD**

After breakfast, we head north, enjoying beautiful landscapes on our route. We will make a stop at ZEINODIN, a sixteenth-century caravanserai located on the ancient Silk Road, declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO. This is one of 999 inns built during the reign of Shah Abbas I to provide accommodation for travelers. Lunch included. We will also visit the historic city of SAR YAZD where its great fortress built 1500 years ago stands out. We continue our route to YAZD, a beautiful city in the desert, with a historic center that is a World Heritage Site, its winding streets, its wind towers and its brick and adobe houses. The city, founded 5000 years ago, is inhabited by people from different cultures, where 10% of the population follows the ancient religion of Zoroaster. Time for a stroll through its old town, which according to UNESCO is one of the oldest settlements in the world.

Overnight Stay at Hotel.

## **Day 11: Day 11 - YAZD**

After breakfast we will visit the city of Yazd, we will love its traditional atmosphere and the customs of its inhabitants. On the outskirts of the city, we will visit the Towers of Silence, where, according to Zoroastrian beliefs, corpses are deposited, considered impure, so that they do not contaminate the sacred elements: earth, water or fire. Later, in the historic center, we visit the Amir Chakhmaq compound, with its impressive three-story façade, which includes a caravanserai, cistern and public toilet. We also visit the Water Museum, to introduce us to the great construction works of underground canals, used for 2000 years, to preserve water from evaporation. Lunch included. In the afternoon, we visit the Fire Temple, a sacred place for the Zoroastrian community of fire worship, a fundamental symbol of their religion. It is said that the sacred fire of the temple has not stopped burning since 470 AD. We also visit the Dolat Abad garden, a World Heritage Site. Its 33.8-meter wind tower is the tallest adobe wind tower in the world.

Overnight Stay at Hotel.

## **Day 12: Day 12 - YAZD - CHAK CHAK - KHARANG - GARMEH - KHUR**

After breakfast, we'll head to CHAK CHAK, a small mountain town with a sacred shrine for Zoroastrians. Every year, thousands of Zoroastrians from Iran, India, and other countries make a pilgrimage to this fire temple.

Later, a volcanic and arid landscape will lead us to a historic mud-brick town, KHARANAGH, "birthplace of the sun". We will be able to visit its castle, its caravanserai and its old stone bridge. Lunch included.

Continuation to GARMEH, for many, the most beautiful desert village in Iran. Surrounded by palm trees and with its spring of water, this adobe oasis village has been populated for more than 4,000 years and was a stop on the Silk Road. We continue to KHUR, a small active town in the middle of the desert.

Overnight Stay at Hotel.

## **Day 13: Day 13 - KHUR – TABAS - ESFAHAK - FERDOWS**

We will depart from Khur to the east of the country; we will cross the "dry salt lake" with its colors and polygonal crystal formations. We will make a stop in TABAS, known as "the bride of the desert", a pleasant city where we will visit the Golshan Garden. Afterwards, we will stop at the Historic Village of ESFAHAK, an oasis city that was destroyed by an earthquake in 1978, rebuilt as an adobe city and hiding many places of great charm. Lunch included.

We will continue to FERDOWS, recently declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site for its "Qanat". This city on the edge of the desert is known for its excellent saffron and pomegranates. We will head to Baghestan-e Olia to visit Baladeh Qanat and explore how the ancient Iranians used their technology to supply water in arid areas and desert regions centuries ago. Then, we'll stroll through its tree-lined streets.

Overnight Stay at Hotel.

## **Day 14: Day 14 - FERDOWS- GONABAD- FERDOWS- TORBAT-E JAM**

We continue our route to the east. We will meet at the impressive qanat of GONABAD QASABEH, continuation of our route to TORBAT JAM, a small provincial capital located near the border with Afghanistan, inhabited by the Baluchis, an ethnic group of Sunni religion, known for their unique dance and music as an important cultural expression. We will listen to their music and their stories of victories and failures throughout history. After that, we'll visit the mausoleum of Ahmad Jami, the Underground Mosque, the Tombstone of Sadooghi, the Dome of Firoozshahi and the Caravanserai of Jam.

Overnight stay at Hotel.

## **Day 15: Day 15 - TORBAT-E JAM - MASHHAD**

A little over two hours away, approaching the borders of Turkmenistan and Afghanistan, we find a city full of strength: MASHHAD, the holiest city in Iran, which, with its three million inhabitants, is also the second city in the country. The Haram, its massive shrine complex commemorating the martyrdom in 818 of the eighth Shiite imam, is a place of pilgrimage, attracting more than 20 million pilgrims a year. We will visit the shrine of Haram-e Razavi, with its dazzling blue domes and minarets that seem to transport us to the tales of the Arabian Nights. We must be respectful of our attire and surroundings (non-Muslims can access all outer courtyards, but they will not be allowed to enter the interior of holy buildings). We will also learn about the mausoleum of Nader Shah, who after his military campaigns returned with immense riches: the peacock throne, the Koh-i-Noor diamond and "700 elephants, 4,000 camels and 12,000 horses carrying chariots, all loaded with gold, silver and precious stones". Nader ordered that upon his return, Mughal craftsmen should build him a large tomb in the Mughal style: the Kakh-e-Khorshid, or "Palace of the Sun." Lunch included. In the afternoon, we will also visit the Anthropological Museum located in the former public bath and the Darougheh House Palace. Free time.

Overnight stay at Hotel.

## **Day 16: Day 16 - MASHHAD - NISHAPUR - ZAFARANIYEH - SABZEVAR**

After breakfast, we drive to NISHABUR, a city that was once one of the most prosperous in the country, on the ancient silk road, today its activity is focused on agriculture and turquoise mines. We will also visit the mausoleum and planetarium of Omar Khayam, a Persian mathematician and astronomer originally from this town, and the "wooden mosque" on the outskirts. Lunch included. We continue to ZAFARANIYEH, a quiet village on the Silk Road that has maintained its ancient caravanserai, also its ancient "ice house" and the remains of its great citadel. After that, we continue to SABZEVAR, an active provincial capital whose history dates back to 1000BC, the city has several universities. We'll visit its main mosque and suggest a stroll through its historic bazaar.



Overnight stay at Hotel.

## **Day 17: Day 17 - SABZEVAR - JANGALE ABR - DAMGHAN**

Total Distance: 253 km

Landscapes: after a journey among so many deserts, today we will be surprised by the variety of landscapes in Iran; the Alborz mountain range separates us from the Caspian Sea, with its peaks of more than 5000 meters.

08.30 hrs- Sabzevar- departure. We find ourselves in a landscape of cloudy, green, humid and mountainous forest in the Alborz mountain range.

11.30 hrs- Abr, in the mountains, deviating from our path, we arrive at this village where its streams and the great humid forest take us to another world, we are in one of the most beautiful landscape in the country, frequently covered by fog and dense clouds, sometimes so thick that it seems that we could walk on them. Lunch included.

14.00 hrs- Abr, departure. On our route to Tehran there are numerous old caravanserais that offered accommodation for caravans, as we follow the Silk Road.

16.00 hrs- Damghan, we will visit the archaeological site of Tappeh Hesar which shows us that this small city has existed for 4000 years and was the capital of one of the areas conquered by Alexander the Great. They say Damghan pistachios are the best in the world, should we try them? We visit Tarikhaneh, the second oldest mosque in Iran with its tall minaret. Accommodation.

Overnight Stay at Hotel.

## **Day 18: Day 18 - Damghan – Garmsar – Tehran.**

Total Distance: 356 km

08.30 hrs-Damghan- Departure.

11.30 hrs- Garmsar, stop for a stroll in a small town inhabited mainly by the Tat, an ethnic minority that has its own language and customs. Lunch included.

13.00 hrs- Garmsar, departure.

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13.15 hrs- Salt Mine (entrance included), Very close to Garmsar, we will stop to visit an impressive salt mine, with underground areas with immense rooms and columns and surprising colors.

15.15 hrs- Salt Mine departure.

18.00 hrs- Tehran, arrival

Overnight Stay at Hotel.

## **Day 19: Day 19 - Depature**

After breakfast, transfer to the airport and end of our services.

## **Highlights**

This 16-day Iran itinerary offers an immersive journey through the country's rich history, stunning architecture, and diverse landscapes, from the bustling metropolis of Tehran to the ancient ruins of Persepolis and the serene deserts of Khur. Highlights include UNESCO World Heritage sites, vibrant bazaars, grand mosques, historic caravanserais, and encounters with Persian culture through music, poetry, and cuisine. The trip also explores Zoroastrian heritage in Yazd, troglodyte dwellings in Meymand, and the spiritual significance of Mashhad, providing a deep and comprehensive experience of Iran's cultural and historical treasures.

## **Tour Includes**

- Europamundo General Services: Travel by bus with English speaking guide, basic travel insurance, hotel and breakfast buffet.
- Includes arrival transfer
- City tour in: Tehran, Kashan, Isfahan, Shiraz, Yazd
- Experiences: visit with an Islamic scholar to the Fatima Mausoleum in Qom, Flower drinks factory visit and tasting in Kashan , meeting with an imam to talk about Islam and traditional Persian music concert in Isfahan , dinner with a local family at their home in Shiraz
- Ticket admission: Imamzadeh Saleh Shrine, Milad Tower, National Museum, Golestan Palace and National Jewelry Museum in Tehran, Khomeini Mausoleum , Courtyards of the Mausoleum of Fatima and house of Khomeini in Qom , Fin garden, Agha Bozorg Mosque, Boroujerdi House,

Hamman Soltan in Kashan; Tappeh Sialk archaeological site in Kashan , underground city of Noush Abad , Armenian Cathedral, Bethlehem Church, Jamé Mezuita, Ali Qapu Palace, Imam Mosque, Chehel Sotun Palace and Music Museum in Isfahan , gardens and mausoleum of Hafez and Saadi, Persepolis, Naghshe Rostam, Pink Mosque and Zandyeh compound in Shiraz , Pasargad , Bagh Shazdeh in Mahan; Ganjali Kahn archaeological site and Fathabad garden in Kerman , Caravanserai Zeinodin , Towers of Silence, Amir Chakhmaq Archaeological Site, Water Museum and Dolat Abad Garden in Yazd , Golshan garden in Tabas, Baladeh Qanat in Ferdows , Mausoleum of Ahmad Jami, the Underground Mosque, the Tombstone of Sadooghi, the Dome of Firoozshahi and the Caravanserai in Torbat Jam , Haram-e Razavi Shrine, Nader Shah Mausoleum, Anthropological Museum and Darougheh House Palace in Mashhad , Omar Khayam mausoleum and planetarium and wooden mosque in Nishapur; Sabzevar Mosque , Tappeh Hesar archaeological site; Tarikhaneh mosque , Garmsar Salt Mine

- 15 Lunch included in: Tehran, Qom, Abouzeid Caravanaserai, Isfahan, Shiraz, Meymand, Kerman, Yazd, Yazd, Kharang, Esfahak, Mashhad, Nishapur, Damghan, Garmsar
- 3 dinner included in: Tehran, Shiraz, Shiraz
- Powered by Europamundo Vacations.

## **Tour Excludes**

- Airfare / Visa / Insurance.
- GST 5%
- TCS at 5% (Tax Collected at Source)
- Any increase in Airfare, Visa fees, Airport taxes, Govt. Taxes, Fuel Surcharges and any applicability of new taxes from Govt.
- Any up gradation in Airline class or hotel room category
- Cost of Air ticket deviation charges
- Any Increase in the rate of exchange leading to an increase in all land arrangements which may come in to effect prior to departure
- Cost of pre or post tour hotel accommodation
- Any extra expense such as route change, Airline change, Date change, Accommodation facilities, etc incurred due to the unforeseen, unavoidable forced majeure circumstances during the tour

- Cost of insurance for 61years and above
- Porterage, laundry, telephone charges, shopping, wines & alcoholic beverages, items of personal nature and food or drink which is not part of a set group menu
- Any extra cost incurred on behalf of an individual due to illness, accident, hospitalisation, or any personal emergency
- Any services or activity charges other than those included in the group tour itinerary
- To and fro Air fare, Airport transfers, insurance, visa fees to join/leave the group for joining and leaving guests
- Anything specifically not mentioned in the 'tour price includes' column
- Conversion Rate on the date of actual payment will be based on the Rate of Euro on XE.com + INR 1.50

Airfare to be calculated at the time of booking as per actual.