Tour Notes

London to Iran – Rail Adventure

Tour Duration – 14 Days

Tour Rating

Fitness ●●●○○ | Off the Beaten Track ●●●●○ | Culture ●●●●○ | History ●●●○ | Wildlife ●○○○

Tour Pace

Busy

Tour Highlights

✓ A unique opportunity to travel all the way by train from London to Iran
✓ Stopover in Hungary, Romania and Turkey
✓ Travel by a range of comfortable daytime and overnight sleeper trains
✓ Take the Trans-Asia Express from Ankara to Tehran – a remarkable journey of 2,300km
✓ Travel through remote regions of Eastern Turkey before taking a ferry for the 90km passage across Lake Van
✓ Meet your fellow travellers renowned for their warm hospitality
✓ A flexible itinerary that can be amended to include longer stopovers along the way
✓ Extend your stay in Iran which many travellers say is the friendliest country on earth
Tour Essentials

Accommodation: Mix of centrally located mid-range hotels
Included Meals: Daily breakfast (except on days 1, 4, 7, 11 and 12)
Group Size: Private tour
Start Point: London
End Point: Tehran
Transport: Private car or minibus for transfers and sightseeing excursions, trains - second class seats for day time journeys and private sleeping compartments for overnight journeys
Countries: France (transit only), Germany, Austria (transit only), Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria (transit only), Turkey, Iran
London to Iran – Rail Adventure

A unique opportunity to travel all the way by train from the UK to the Iranian capital Tehran.

A thoroughly well-planned journey with all trains and hotels, together with transfers and sightseeing as shown in the itinerary arranged for you in advance.

Your adventure starts from London’s impressive St. Pancras station. Travel by Eurostar to Paris and then onwards by a high-speed TGV train to Munich where you will break your journey for the night. The next day take a modern Austrian Railjet train from Munich through pretty Bavarian countryside, then via the Alps, before heading on through Austria to Budapest. Having reached the Hungarian capital it will be time to break the journey for another overnight stay, or longer if you wish. With your private guide discover Budapest’s mixture of old and modern, and grand architecture which makes the city one of our favourite European capitals. Undoubtedly its charm lies in the many cultural influences that have shaped the city during its long history. After spending the day exploring Budapest it will be time to board the overnight Ister sleeper train for Romania. The next morning you will wake up as the train travels through Transylvania and the Carpathian Mountains – a wonderfully scenic journey. After a lunchtime arrival in Bucharest you will be met at the station and transferred to your hotel where you will stay for two nights.

During your stopover in the Romanian capital you will have time to see the city’s highlights, and to get some rest before starting the next leg of your adventure by taking the Bosfor sleeper train to Istanbul. The train travels across Romania and over the Danube into Bulgaria on the world’s longest steel girder bridge, 2.5km long. It then meanders through the lovely scenic valleys of Bulgaria and into Turkey, arriving in Istanbul the next morning. We would recommend a stay of at least two nights in what we think has to be one of the greatest cities in the world, a magical meeting place of East and West.

You will continue your journey east by high-speed train from Istanbul to Ankara where you will stay for the night. The next morning take in some of the city’s highlights before boarding the weekly Trans-Asia Express train for a truly epic 2,300km journey to Iran. In fact it is actually two trains, a Turkish one from Ankara to Tatvan pier, then a ferry across Lake Van, then an Iranian train which heads south east from Van pier to Tehran. Along the way expect some stunning scenery as you pass through remote regions of Eastern Turkey. The whole journey is scheduled to take around 60 hours so you will have plenty of time to meet your fellow passengers. And for many travellers this will be the true highlight of their adventure, a fantastic opportunity to meet friendly local people, including many Iranians who are renowned for their generous hospitality. Although there is a simple restaurant car normally available on both legs of the journey most passengers come prepared with more than adequate supplies of food and drink, which they are eager to share.

A trip on the Trans-Asia Express is like no other, a special experience that will soon dispel any misconceptions that you may have had of one of the world’s’ most enigmatic and misunderstood countries. And that’s even before you have stepped off the train in Tehran.

Welcome to Iran.
Tour itinerary notes

The itinerary has been carefully planned based on the latest train schedules, but timings can change at short notice, or the days of the week that a particular train normally operates can also change. This will potentially require amending your itinerary and the number of nights that you stay in each city. Before you are asked to accept any changes our experienced travel consultants will discuss the options with you. But these may be limited so it is important you can be flexible.

Tour Guide

This journey will be best suited to experienced travellers who are comfortable exploring without being accompanied throughout by a guide or tour leader. At each location, except for a change of trains in Paris and an overnight stop in Munich, you will meet our experienced local partners for private guided sightseeing. They will also welcome you on arrival at the station, and provide a private transfer to your hotel. At the end of your stopover you will be taken back to the station for your onward journey.

Itinerary

Day 1 – London to Munich
Take a morning Eurostar to Paris. Upon arrival at Gare du Nord make your own way to Gare de l'Est. It takes just 10 minutes to walk between the two stations, or if you prefer a short taxi ride. From Paris take a double-decker TGV high-speed train to Munich. Sit back and relax as the train speeds across a vast wide open plateau of woods and farmland at up to 200mph and past picturesque French villages of the Champagne region. After a stop in Strasbourg the train continues over the Rhine into Germany, before heading on to Stuttgart and Munich where you will arrive at around 9.30pm. Make your own way to your hotel conveniently located very close to the station. Overnight InterCity Hotel or similar.

Day 2 – Munich to Budapest
After a leisurely breakfast take a late morning Austrian Railjet train for the 6½ hour journey to Budapest. After departure from Munich the train travels through pretty Bavarian countryside, then via the Alps, before heading on through Austria to Budapest. Perhaps enjoy lunch served in the train’s bistro car as you take in the wonderful scenery. Upon arrival in the Hungarian capital you will be met at the station and transferred to your centrally located hotel for an overnight stay. Overnight Mercure Budapest City Centre or similar. (B)

Day 3 – Budapest to Bucharest
After breakfast meet your guide in the lobby of the hotel and enjoy an in depth look at Budapest's attractions and contemporary culture on a four-hour walking tour. Set off to visit the city’s most popular sights. During the tour stop for traditional cake and coffee (included in the price of your tour), before pre-paid public transportation takes you to Castle Hill. Being a private tour you set the pace and decide how much time you want to spend at each location. After the tour enjoy some free time in the afternoon. And perhaps before your transfer back to the station stock-up on some provisions ahead of the long journey to Bucharest. This is important as on-train catering is unlikely to be available, certainly not until the next morning. At the station board the Ister sleeper service for Bucharest which departs just after 7pm. Overnight sleeper train (2 berth compartment). (B)
Day 4 – Bucharest
Wake up as the train meanders through Transylvania and then the Carpathian Mountains as it heads towards Bucharest. You may be lucky and find that a bistro car has been attached to the train where you can buy some breakfast, otherwise you will need to depend on the provisions that you brought with you. Arrival at Bucharest’s imposing Gara de Nord station will be around lunchtime. You will be met and transferred to your centrally located hotel where you will stay for two nights. Overnight Hotel K+K Hotel Elisabeta or similar.

Day 5 – Bucharest
After breakfast meet your guide in the hotel for a private morning city tour. Discover Bucharest’s key sights including the grandiose Palace of Parliament and explore the city centre including the Royal Palace, Revolution Square, and Calea Victoriei. Later return to your hotel, with time to rest before leaving the next day for Istanbul. Overnight Hotel K+K Hotel Elisabeta or similar. (B)

Day 6 – Bucharest to Istanbul
After breakfast, make sure that you stock-up on plenty of provisions for the next leg of your adventure, as there are no catering facilities available on the Bosfor train to Istanbul. The train is scheduled to leave in the late morning and in the afternoon travels across Romania and over the Danube into Bulgaria on the world’s longest steel girder bridge, 2.5km long. It then takes a steady pace through the lovely scenic valleys of Bulgaria into Turkey. At the Bulgarian town of Dimitrovgrad the direct Bucharest to Istanbul carriages are detached and joined to the Sofia to Istanbul Express train. In the late evening the train will reach the Bulgarian / Turkish border, and passengers must get off to have their passport checked. Your luggage will also be examined and possibly put through an x-ray machine. After a stop of about an hour or so the Bosfor continues its journey to Istanbul arriving early the next morning. Overnight train (4 berth couchette compartment booked for exclusive use). (B)

Important Information
Please note that the direct Bucharest to Istanbul Bosfor train operates from early June to early October only. Outside of this period it is still possible to travel via this route by train, but it will be necessary to take a series of connecting trains (two connections required) firstly to Dimitrovgrad in Bulgaria, from where it is possible to join an onward train to Istanbul.

An alternative option to the above, and one that should be considered if you are planning to travel before June or after the beginning of October, is a route that will take you from the UK via Germany, Croatia, Serbia and Bulgaria to Istanbul. Please contact us for further details.

Day 7 – Istanbul
Arrive in Istanbul early in the morning. At the time of writing because of construction work, the Sofia/Bucharest to Istanbul train terminates at Halkali, a suburban station 25km west of central Istanbul. Rather than taking a local train into the city, you will be met at Halkali station and transferred by private car or pre-arranged taxi directly to your centrally located hotel. Early check-in will be subject to availability so you will have the option to leave your luggage at the hotel should you want to explore the local area on foot. Alternatively relax in the hotel’s lounge or take breakfast in the restaurant (not included in the price of your tour) whilst you wait for your room to become available.
Later meet your guide at the hotel and set-off for a private afternoon city tour. Marvel at Istanbul’s best Ottoman sites taking in the Hippodrome, Blue Mosque and Topkapi Palace. This tour captures the essence of why the Sultanahmet district, which you will visit, is a UNESCO World Heritage site. You will learn about the history of Istanbul dating back to its former Ottoman days as Constantinople. Plus, hear old stories about the reign of sultans from your expert guide and admire architecture and ancient relics within each famous attraction. Later return to your hotel. Overnight Mercure Istanbul Sirkeci Hotel or similar.

Day 8 – Istanbul
A full day in Istanbul for you to explore the city on your own. Or if you want to arrange extra guided sightseeing just ask at your hotel. Overnight Mercure Istanbul Sirkeci Hotel or similar. (B)

Day 9 – Istanbul to Ankara
After a leisurely breakfast you will be transferred to Söğütlüçeşme station which is located on the eastern side of the Bosphorus. Formerly trains would head east from Istanbul’s old Haydarpaşa station but it is currently closed for major renovation work and when it re-opens it will be part of the city’s suburban rail network. Sadly it will no longer have the status it once did, as the gateway to Asia, with trains bound for such exotic destinations as Baghdad, Aleppo and Madinah. Located close to Haydarpaşa you will take an air-conditioned 250 km/h high-speed YHT train (Yüksek Hızlı Treni) from Söğütlüçeşme to the Turkish capital, Ankara, a scenic journey of about 4½ hours. Upon arrival in Ankara you will be met at the station and taken to your hotel where you will stay overnight. Overnight Holiday Inn Ankara-Cukurambar or similar. (B)

Day 10 – Ankara and Departure on the Trans-Asia Express
After pick-up from your hotel, set-off with your private guide for a morning city tour. Visit the Museum of Anatolian Civilisations, home to displays of remnants such as jewellery, dishes, and sculptures - all thousands of years old and from the Stone Age and Neolithic Age as well as the Hittite, Urartian, and Phrygian periods. With your guide, take in a view of the Ankara Castle, also known as the Ankara Citadel. The hilltop castle was controlled by the Romans, Byzantines, Seljuq Turks, crusaders, and again by Seljuqs in the 1200s before the citadel had extensive repairs under the order of Ibrahim Pasa in the 1800s. Next admire Anıtkabir, the mausoleum of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the leader of the Turkish War of Independence and first president of the Republic of Turkey. Return to your hotel and perhaps take the opportunity to stock-up on provisions for your long journey ahead. Alternatively ask your guide to stop at a grocery store before you are dropped back at the hotel. Later you will be transferred to the railway station where you will board the weekly Trans-Asian Express train. The first leg of your epic adventure will be a comfortable Turkish train that will take you to the shores of Lake Van, a journey of about 24 hours. En-route you will travel through remote East Anatolia and pass some stunning landscapes and you will see the Kızılırmak River, known for its reddish colour. You will also pass the 2km long Fırat Bridge which was built on Keban Dam – the fourth largest lake in Turkey. Overnight train (4 berth couchette compartment booked for exclusive use). (B)

Day 11 – Lake Van
After a morning travelling through some amazing scenery and chatting with your fellow passengers the train will arrive at Tatvan where you will get off and board the connecting ferry for the 3½ hour crossing of Lake Van. The Lake is famous for a small island called Akdamar where an ancient Armenian church is located. Weather permitting you should be able to see the island during the crossing and before you disembark in Van, the terminus for the Iranian Railways operated train to Tehran. From Van to the Turkish/Iranian border the journey normally takes about a couple of hours or so, with arrival expected at around 11pm. At this point everyone will be asked to leave the train at the border station. The passports of all passengers will be stamped, and the luggage will be checked. Generally it can take a couple of hours before all the procedures are completed and then the train will set-off again bound for Tehran. Overnight train (4 berth couchette compartment booked for exclusive use).
Day 12 – Tehran
After the border formalities the night before hopefully you will have managed to get some sleep as the train continues its journey. At around 9am the train will pass the northern shore of Urmia Salt Lake - the sixth-largest saltwater lake on Earth, with a surface area of approximately 5,200 km² and a length of 140km. A little later the train will stop at the busy city of Tabriz, capital of East Azerbaijan Province, and once the location of a major Silk Road market. No doubt some passengers will leave the train here, whilst others will board for the all day journey south to the capital. Almost certainly your fellow passengers will be keen to practise their English, so spend the day chatting and making new friends. You will find that the Iranian people are incredibly hospitable and keen to offer you a warm welcome. Finally, at around 11pm the Trans-Asia will pull into Tehran’s main station where you will be greeted by a driver and taken to your hotel. Overnight Hoveyzeh Hotel or similar.

Day 13 – Tehran
After a good night’s sleep and a leisurely breakfast meet your guide for a private half day city tour. Highlights include Golestan Palace, the city’s main bazaar, the Treasury of National Jewels, known for the Darya-e-Nur, the world’s largest pink diamond. Later return to your hotel. Overnight Hoveyzeh Hotel or similar. (B)

Day 14 – Depart Tehran
Check-out from your hotel before midday. A private transferred will be arranged to take you to the airport to coincide with your departure. (B)

Optional Extension
Undiscovered Destinations has been arranging tours to Iran for more than 10 years. We offer both small group itineraries and private tailormade trips. At every turn, Iran will draw you into its astonishing celebration of timeless cultures. Contact us if you would like to extend your adventure so you can discover more.

Tour inclusions/exclusions

Inclusions:
- All accommodation
- Transfers as per itinerary with a private car or minibus
- Rail travel based on 2nd class seats for day time journeys and private sleeping compartments for overnight journeys. Please contact us for details of first class upgrades
- Guided sightseeing tours as per itinerary, with the services of a private English-speaking guide or driver/guide
- Daily breakfast except on days 1, 4, 7, 11 and 12
- Entrance fees for sites listed as part of the itinerary

Excluded:
- International flights
- Travel Insurance
- Visas
- Meals not stated in the itinerary
- Drinks
- Items of a personal nature
- Tips (Discretionary)
Important Information

Foreign Office Travel Warnings
We constantly monitor the advice posted by the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). In particular we will always advise clients of any travel warnings. At this time there are no warnings in place for areas visited on this tour. It should be noted that this information applies to British citizens. Other nationals are asked to check the current position of their respective government.

Accommodation and Meals

Hotel Check-in Times
As a general rule most hotels will allow guests to check-in from 2pm. Please note that the price of your tour does not include guaranteed early check-in. Therefore, please advise us if you would like to ensure that your room is available for an earlier arrival.

Accommodation Rating
In general four star category hotels will be used for much of this journey. Except in Iran these will often be part of an international chain. Please bear in mind that you will not be accompanied by a guide for the whole duration of this tour. Therefore for assistance you will find that English is often spoken at the hotels, particularly those that are part of an international chain. In Iran you will also be assisted by our experienced Tehran based partner.

Rooms will be comfortable with en-suite bathrooms. And each of the hotels will have a restaurant and bar.

Food and Drink
The daily meal basis is shown in the tour itinerary which is breakfast, except on days 1, 4, 7, 11 and 12 when no meals are included.

Usually it will be impossible for Undiscovered Destinations to pre-pay for meals and drinks taken on the various trains. Therefore, it is essential that you travel with sufficient cash to pay for these services as credit and debit cards are not always accepted. In particular there is very little if any card acceptance in Iran. We would recommend that you have euros available as these will offer the best overall acceptance. When travelling in Turkey you should have the local currency available, the Turkish lira. Preferably you should have a mix of denominations and avoid only having larger notes. Once you have entered Iran you will be able to exchange euros or lira for Iranian rials.

The food and drink available to purchase on trains, when it is offered, can be limited so many travellers come prepared and choose to bring their own provisions. You will find a choice of shops and eateries at most stations. We recommend that you travel with plenty of water, and items such as fresh and dried fruits, biscuits, crackers, etc.

Please note that it is illegal to drink alcohol in Iran, or to bring it into the country.
Dietary Requirements
If you have any special dietary requirements you must notify us at the time of booking. Whilst we will make every effort to cater for you, we cannot guarantee that this will be possible.

As noted above on-train catering can be limited, particularly in Eastern Europe. Even the most common dietary requests, including vegetarian options, may not be available.

Budgeting for your Tour
You will need some extra money to cover meals and drinks not included in the tour price, any optional sightseeing, souvenirs and items of a personal nature such as laundry.

Food
The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Lunch or dinner £7 to £15

Drink
The prices for drinks can vary greatly depending upon location and the prices detailed below are an average guide. In general, you would expect that drinks purchased in a supermarket or local bar to be less expensive, whilst drinks in an upmarket bar or restaurant may be more expensive.

Bottle of beer £2 - £3
Bottle of water £0.50 - £1
Soft drink £0.75

Tipping – Guide and Drivers
Tipping is commonly recognised as a way of rewarding guides and drivers for good service. As you will not be accompanied by a guide throughout, we suggest you budget to tip the guide for each of the tours included in the itinerary. We would recommend €5 to €10 per person for each tour. This will depend on the duration of the tour.

Waiters and bar staff in most of the countries visited on this tour are generally low paid and it is common practice to leave a small tip – around 10% of the bill.

On Train Safety and Security
The Undiscovered Destinations’ team have travelled widely by train and never experienced any problems, but you should not be complacent. It is essential that you take good care of your personal belongings. Pack wisely and store your most valuable possessions, including electrical items and of course your passports and travel documents in a separate day bag. Also remember to keep any important medicines and prescriptions or doctors’ letters in the same bag. And make sure you keep this bag with you at all times. Some travellers choose to keep their passport, one or two credit/debit cards and some emergency cash in a money belt.
When travelling by sleeper train the carriage will generally be staffed by an attendant. On newer trains you might be able to lock your compartment from the outside using a hotel type key-card. But this is still the exception. So you will need to ask your attendant to lock the door for you if you are planning to leave the compartment. During the night you will be able to lock the compartment door from the inside. Some experienced travellers choose to bring their own padlock just in case the door lock is faulty. We can recommend a combination cable padlock as this can also be used to help secure your baggage to luggage racks.

**Sleeping Car Attendant**

The attendant plays an important role, and can add to the success of your trip. They will be responsible for your security and can be a great help in other ways. Although perhaps unfairly they may have a reputation for being surly, in our experience that has always been the exception. A few pleasantries in the local language will help, as will a small tip when they welcome you onto the train. Perhaps have a small gift to offer. Something from your home country will be a nice gesture. This can make all of the difference and you can be sure that you will be well looked after. For example when the train stops, and there is a chance for a walk along the platform, the attendant will ensure you do not get left behind. So it is well worth making the effort.

**Foreign Exchange**

**ATM Availability:** As you will be visiting major cities on this tour ATMs will be widely available except in Iran.

**Credit and Debit Card Acceptance:** Cards are widely accepted in the main cities including at larger restaurants and most hotels. Card acceptance on the trains will be more limited, particularly beyond Western Europe. Cards are not widely accepted in Iran.

**Local Currency:** Euros, Hungarian Forint, Romanian Leu, Turkish Lira, Iranian Rial.

**Recommended Currency for Exchange:** Euros and US Dollar.

**Where to Exchange:** Exchange facilities will generally be available at the railways stations and border crossings. During city tours your guide will be able to help you find somewhere to exchange money; otherwise the hotel reception can provide further assistance.

**Flight Information**

Our advertised prices do not include the cost of international flights. Please contact us if you would like a quotation to book a ‘flight inclusive’ package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

**Travel Insurance**

It is a condition of booking with Undiscovered Destinations that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country and be valid for the entire duration of your holiday.

**Visa Information**

UK, US and Australian passport holders do not need a visa for travel in EU states.

British Citizens travelling to Turkey for tourist purposes can enter the country without a visa for visits of up to 90 days in any 180-day period. Other nationals should check before booking with your nearest embassy, consulate or visa agency.
Visas for Iran

Most nationals need a visa to travel to Iran. Since April 2016 tourist visas can be obtained from the Iranian Consulate in London. Please be advised that British citizens MUST apply in person. Generally the processing time is less than a week, but we recommend that you apply at the earliest opportunity. Before the Consulate can issue your visa, authorisation must be obtained from the country’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) in Tehran. This will be requested through our local partner in Iran and generally will be issued by the Ministry no earlier than 3 to 4 weeks before the start date of your tour. Accordingly it is essential that you are in possession of your passport and will be available to travel to the Consulate at this time.

Around three months before departure, we will send you a form for completion, required by our partner for submission to the MoFA. We will also require a scanned copy of your passport and a scan of a passport sized colour photograph. Please note that women, and girls over the age of nine, should wear a headscarf in their visa application photos. British, Canadian and US citizens will also be required to provide a curriculum vitae and a list of countries visited in the last ten years. Once the authorisation code has been issued it will be sent directly to the Consulate, as well as to you, and after that you can make your visa application in person.

The current price is £195 and £250 for an express visa; cash is the only form of payment accepted. You should bear in mind that this can change at any time.

For non-UK nationals please check the current procedure with your nearest Iranian Embassy or Consulate. An ‘e-visa’ may be available for nationals from certain countries, including some EU states, but not the UK.

Non-UK nationals who will be obtaining a visa on arrival will be asked to pay $20 per person at the airport for health insurance.

Please check the expiry date of your visa before travelling. If you overstay you may have to remain in Iran until the situation is resolved.

Entry to Iran will be refused if your passport contains evidence of travel to Israel, even if you have been granted an Iranian visa. Note this is not confined to an Israeli visa stamp and also includes Egyptian and Jordanian entry or departure stamps obtained at the land border with Israel.

As immigration requirements can change without notice it is essential that you check the latest information with your nearest embassy, consulate or visa agency. It is important to check the requirements both at the time of booking and again at the time you pay your balance.

Passports

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are in possession of a full passport, valid for at least six months after the date of return to your country of residence.

We strongly advise that your passport contains a minimum of two blank pages, as this may be a requirement of the local immigration authorities. In addition, certain countries will stipulate that the two blank pages are opposite each other. If you are unable to meet these requirements you may be refused boarding by your airline or denied entry by the immigration authorities.

For specific information about the requirements for your destination please check with the country’s embassy or consulate. Alternatively UK citizens can visit www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice
Vaccinations and Protection
We strongly recommend that you contact your doctor's surgery or a specialist travel clinic for up-to-date information and advice regarding the necessary vaccinations. For a visit of less than one month, almost certainly you will be advised to have immunisations against the following: Diphtheria and Tetanus, Hepatitis A, Typhoid and Meningitis.

Preparing for your tour

Climate
The region can be bitterly cold in its winter months and fiercely hot during July and August. A pleasant time to visit is early June or September.

Clothing
When it comes to clothing light garments are recommended for during the day, while you should take a jumper or something warmer to wear on some of the evenings. It is also advisable to wear a hat during the day to protect from the sun, and you should also bring something waterproof for any rainy days.

Iran is a very conservative country in terms of clothing. Men should wear long trousers and shirts – although short sleeved shirts are generally acceptable, you may be required to wear long sleeves when entering certain religious buildings.

Under Iranian law, all women must observe the hijab, which means modest dress (a thigh length loose fitting garment, with at least three quarter length sleeves) and a headscarf also covering the neck, which can be any colour. Many Iranian women wear western clothing under an inexpensive overall called a manteaux which can be purchased locally. However, standards have relaxed considerably, and long, loose fitting blouses worn over trousers or a full length skirt are now acceptable. A headscarf must still be worn in public.

Equipment and What to Bring
The first thing on your list should be a first aid kit. Whilst there is no undue cause for alarm, travellers are best advised to travel well-prepared: adequately immunized, with sufficient supplies of prescription drugs, along with a medical kit. Suncream/sunblock is a must. Insect repellent, including a bite spray will also be useful to have. It is usually advisable to bring a torch/head torch in case of any electricity outages.

When travelling long distances by rail some travellers choose to bring a few games to while away the hours. A pack of cards, or travel versions of board games are popular. Something that can be played with your fellow travellers and non-English speakers is recommended.

A phrase book can of course be useful or download a translation app on your phone.

Please bring a small towel to use on trains as hand drying facilities are not always provided.
Wi-Fi
The majority of hotels used on this tour offer reliable wi-fi although charges may apply.

On most trains within Western Europe wi-fi is now available although charges may apply and the service might be limited to basic internet browsing and checking of emails. Travelling beyond Western Europe most trains do not offer wi-fi. Depending on your service provider you will probably be able to access wi-fi through local mobile phone networks. But check with your provider as costs can be high.

Footwear
Footwear is a main priority on this tour. Comfortable walking shoes are recommended. We recommend that you bring a pair of flip-flops to wear whilst moving about on long distance trains.

Journey times
Upon request we can provide you with the latest train schedules, although these may be subject to change.

Luggage on tour
Your luggage should not exceed 20kgs (44lbs). One large suitcase/rucksack, and one small hand luggage rucksack is acceptable.

Electric Supply & Plugs
Countries visited on this tour have an electrical supply that is 220V/50 Hz and plugs usually have two round pins. On the majority of trains you will find electrical sockets which usually have two round pins.

We would recommend that you bring a universal travel adapter as there can be exceptions to the above.

Tour Itinerary Versions
Please ensure that you have an up-to-date copy of these tour notes immediately before you travel, as from time to time our itineraries may be amended, either for operational reasons or in response to feedback from customers. You will be informed of any major changes to your tour but small changes may just be added to these tour notes. These tour notes were updated 25 April 2020.