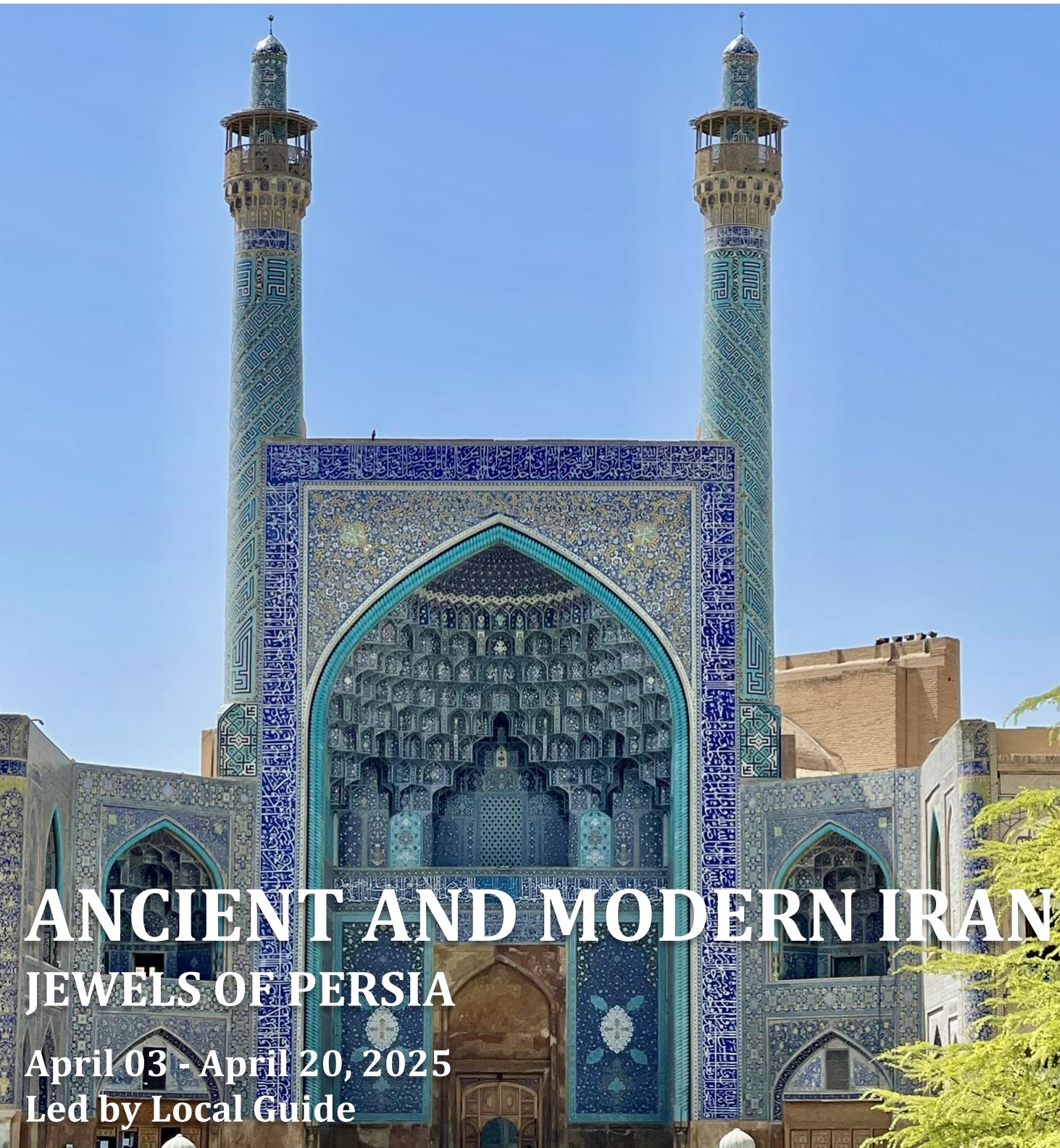


DISCOVER THE WONDERS

SPIEKERMANN

TRAVEL SERVICE



# ANCIENT AND MODERN IRAN JEWELS OF PERSIA

April 03 - April 20, 2025  
Led by Local Guide

Iran is home to a breathless mix of spectacular madrassas, exquisite mosques, and some of the world's most beautiful examples of Islamic architecture. Everywhere you look, the magnificence of 2,500 years of history lies around you. Ancient Persia has been the seat of many civilizations and unique contributions to poetry, art, architecture, science, and history. Many of Iran's achievers have contributed to our modern world. The country's archaeological gems are well-preserved and portray a rich historical heritage. Your tour will explore ancient ruins and colorful cities, exotic bazaars, and old baths—Marvel at ancient monuments and beautifully tiled mosques. Stroll through medieval bazaars that remain much as they were centuries ago. Stop to visit local nomadic tribes when driving across the vast country. Your journey will take you to Yazd, the center of Zoroastrian culture, Shiraz city of poets with major Jewish and Christian communities, and Isfahan and Persepolis's UNESCO World Heritage sites. Come and discover Iran, a repository of grand relics and ruins.

**Ihab Zaki**  
Managing Director

**Thursday, April 03**  
**Arrive in Tehran (IRAN)**



Upon arrival at **Imam Khomeini International Airport**, the guide will meet, and transfer you to the *Hotel* for check-in and overnight.

*Note: Standard check-in time is 3:00 pm. If you arrive on April 02 or in the very early morning on April 03, an extra hotel night needs to be booked.*

**Friday, April 04**  
**Tehran**



This sprawling city became Iran's capital in the 18th century under Agha Mohammad Khan, the founder of the Qajar Dynasty. Tehran (meaning warm slope) is located south of the impressive snow-capped Alborz Mountains, and the city is known for its large museums, art centers, and palaces. Begin the day with a visit to the **Golestan Palace** - a masterpiece of the Qajar era and a **UNESCO site**. Then we proceed to see the **National Archaeological Museum**, the country's foremost museum, established in 1937. See a stone capital of a winged lion from Susa and the 6th century BC audience hall relief of Darius the Great from the Treasury at Persepolis. We are then guided through the **Glass and Ceramics Museum**, which was once an extraordinarily private residence during the Qajar period, and later was used as the Egyptian Embassy. Here we can find glass and ceramic artifacts dating back to the second and 1st millennia BC. Return to the *Hotel* for dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

**Saturday, April 05**  
**Tehran - Masuleh - Anzali**



Begin the day with a drive to **Anzali**, stopping en route in **Masuleh**. See this beautiful 1,000-year-old village in the Mountains of the Alborz, protected by the Iranian Cultural Heritage and Tourism Organization. Have a leisurely walk through the multi-layered paths of the village, with its quaint shops, and enjoy some tea. Relax on a scenic drive back to Anzali and transfer to *Sepid Kenar Hotel* or similar for check-in and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

**Sunday, April 06**  
**Anzali - Tabriz**



Leave the Caspian Sea heading to **Tabriz**, with a visit to **Ardabil** to see one of Iran's precious jewels, the **mausoleum and museum of Sheik Safi-eddinn Ardabil**, the great Sufi Leader of the 14th century and the forefather of the Sufi inspired Safavid kings and another UNESCO World Heritage Site. The visit includes the **tomb of the Sheikh, the tomb of Shah Ismail**, the founder of the Safavid Dynasty, and the 'Chini-Khaneh' (China House), where the famous collection of Chinese blue and white porcelain, ordered by Shah Abbas for his ancestor's tomb, is on display. In the late afternoon, continue the drive to **Tabriz** and, upon arrival, transfer to the *Hotel* for check-in, have a short rest, dinner, and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

**Monday, April 07**  
**Tabriz**



In the morning, we can stroll to the Safavid summer residence of **Shah Goli**, a short walk from the *Hotel*. Tabriz was the capital of the Safavid dynasty until the end of the 16th Century when it was moved to Isfahan. As we will learn, half the world was to be found in the vast square, **Naqsh-e Jahan**. The other half was in Tabriz. Research has shown that this area, today rich in the production of nuts and fruits, might have been the site of the Garden of Eden. First, see the **Blue Mosque**, built by Shah Jahan in 1465, the small, exquisite **Azerbaijan Museum**, and the **Citadel**. Stop by the old **Tabriz Bazaar**, which is a UNESCO site. This afternoon, have a tour of the **Kando-van volcanic village** in Osku of the Eastern Azerbaijan Province. There we find man-made cliff dwellings, which are still inhabited. Return to the *Hotel* for dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

**Tuesday, April 08**  
**Tabriz - Zanjan**



Begin the day with a drive to Zanjan, stopping en route to visit the archaeological site of **Takht-e-Soleiman**, which is situated in a valley in a volcanic mountain region. The site includes the principal **Zoroastrian sanctuary** partly rebuilt in the Ilkhanid (Mongol) period and a temple of the Sasanian period dedicated to Anahita. The site has important symbolic significance. The designs of the fire tem-



ple, the palace, and the general layout have strongly influenced the development of Islamic architecture. Continue the drive to **Zanjan** and, upon arrival, transfer to *Zanjan Grand Hotel or similar* for check-in and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

**Wednesday, April 09**

**Zanjan - Tehran**



Begin the day with a visit to see a **historical public bath**, then leave for Tehran visiting en route the magnificent 14<sup>th</sup> century **Gonbad-eSoltaniyeh**, the tomb/tower of Olijaytu, the last Mongol/Il-Khanid Ruler of Iran (13041330). The monument is remarkable in many different architectural aspects, including its vast dome, which is about 167 feet high and ranks amongst the vastest domes in the world. **Gonbad-e-Soltaniyeh** is one of 13 UNESCO World Heritage sites in Iran. Transfer to *Es-pinas Hotel/Azadi Hotel* for check-in, dinner, and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

**Thursday, April 10**

**Tehran**



Enjoy a full-day tour of **Tehran**, where the first stop will be at the **Saadabad Palace Complex**, founded under the Qajar Kings in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Then head to **Tajrish Bazaar** and enjoy some shopping. Quaint passageways rebuilt hundreds of years ago are home to merchants of every kind of food, clothes, gold and silver jewelry, religious artifacts, artwork, and household goods, all next to each other, in no particular order, lit by a combination of incandescent and daylight sneaking in through the roof. Finally, head to the **Carpet Museum** with its beautiful modern architecture and a façade resembling a carpet-weaving loom. Return to the *Hotel* for dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

**Friday, April 11**

**Tehran - Isfahan**



Enjoy a leisurely drive to **Isfahan**, stopping en route in **Kashan** to see the historical **Garden of Fin**, which was first planted during the Safavid period and kept alive with water from the nearby Suleymaniye Spring/Qanat. The Zand and Qajar monarchs expanded this beautiful walled Persian Garden with many open pavilions added. A museum on the site displays artifacts from nearby **Tepe Sialk**, one of Iran's most important archaeological sites, dating back to 4000-5000 BC. We can also see some of the many restored merchant houses in Kashan, including the **Borujerdi** and **Taba-Tabai House**, with very fine examples of the "Badgirs" or wind-catchers. Further along the way, we stop at the charming **Town of Natanz** to visit a beautiful Islamic Complex of **Friday Mosque, Monastery, and Tomb of Sheikh Abdol Samad Isfahani**. Also, enjoy a tea break under the shade and visit a nearby traditional **pottery workshop**. Isfahan (Esfahan) is the most beautiful of all Iranian cities, located 250 miles south of Tehran at an elevation of nearly a mile. Transfer to *Abbasi/Kowsar Hotel or similar* for check-in, dinner, and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

**Saturday, April 12**

**Isfahan**



Begin the full-day tour with a visit to **Chehel Sotoon Palace** (or Forty Pillars Palace) with its beautiful reflecting pool and **UNESCO-recognized** Persian Gardens. Continue to the **Armenian Quarter** to visit the richly decorated **Vank Cathedral**, completed between 1655 and 1664 under Archbishop David's supervision, with the Safavid rulers' encouragement. It is the historic focal point of the Armenian Christian Church in Iran. In the afternoon, head to a carpet workshop to see Iran's world-famous carpets as we sip tea. Return to the *Hotel* for a short rest, then walk to a famous **Miniaturist's art gallery** to see how this world-renowned artwork is done and enjoy dinner at Shahrzad Restaurant before returning to the *Hotel* for your overnight. **(B,L,D)**

**Sunday, April 13**

**Isfahan**



Enjoy a full-day tour of **Isfahan** beginning with a visit to the first of its two UNESCO sites - **Meidan Emam** to see the **Ali Qapu Palace, Sheikh Lotfollah, and Royal Mosques**. Meidan Emam or Naghsh-e Jahan (literally image of the world) complex is the central focus of Isfahan. Its royal square measures 1674 feet by 540 feet and is enclosed by double-storied arcades. It is unmatched in elegance and spaciousness anywhere in the world! On the north side is the entrance to the **Royal Qaysariyyeh Bazaar**. On the east side is the **Lotfollah Mosque**. It was constructed between 1603 and 1617 and served as a private chapel for the Imperial family. You will see exquisite 17<sup>th</sup>-century Persian tilework on the domed ceiling. On the west side is the **Ali Qapu Palace**. To the south is the Shah or Royal Mosque, dedicated to Shah Abbas the Great. To many, it is considered the most beautiful mosque in the world! Lunch at the Bastani Restaurant. If construction in the area permits, we will visit the antique Friday Mosque or **Masjed-eJame**, Isfahan's second UNESCO Site. As it stands now, it is the result of continual construction, reconstruction, additions, and renovations on the site from around 841 AD to the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Archaeological excavation has determined an Abbasid hypostyle mosque in place by the 10<sup>th</sup> century. Return to the *Hotel* for dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

**Monday, April 14**

**Isfahan - Yazd**



Depart early this morning for Yazd stopping en route in **Meybod** to see the Ancient **Narin Qaleh** or castle, a 17<sup>th</sup>-century Safavid caravanserai. This town is a jewel! See Zilo weaving, learn about the courier service dating back 2,500 years, see the **pigeon house**, and explore the oldest and largest **Icehouse** dating from the Safavid era. Depending on our arrival time, we will have a tour of the **Old city** of Yazd, a UNESCO World Heritage site, and the magnificent Friday Mosque of Yazd. Transfer to *Moshir Garden or Da'ad or Safaiyeh Hotel* for check-in and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Tuesday, April 15

Yazd - Kerman



Today we enjoy a half-day tour of Yazd, dotted with badgers throughout to help naturally cool this desert city. It is the second oldest city in the world, according to **UNESCO**, from an architectural viewpoint. We begin with a visit to the **Zoroastrian Fire Temple**. Continue to the **Tower of Silence**, a former Zoroastrian cemetery. While a majority of the population is Muslim, there is a significant minority of both Jews and Zoroastrians. The religion is monotheistic and dualistic, which influenced Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Zoroastrians revere fire as a symbol of God and keep eternal flames burning at their temples. See the **Water Museum** and learn about Qanats, an advanced technology system first developed about 1000 BC to bring mountain water through underground conduits to the plains. It rivals the Roman system of Aqueducts. Today about 22,000 qanats provide 75% of Iran's fresh water. In the afternoon, our scenic 5-hour drive is through some beautiful pistachio orchards. Upon arrival, transfer to *Pars Hotel* or similar for check-in, dinner, and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Wednesday, April 16

Kerman



After breakfast, begin a half-day excursion to **Rayen** and **Mahan**. Drive up into the mountains to the town of Rayen and visit one of the oldest citadels in Iran. Continue to **Shahzadeh (Prince) Garden** and stroll through the beautiful garden with its waterfall cascades (late 19th-century Qajar period garden/mansion). Enjoy lunch in the garden, and in the afternoon, visit **Mahan** to see the **blue-tiled Mausoleum of Shah Nematollahe-Vali**, the great 14th-century Sufi leader. Then around 3:00 pm, return to Kerman and visit the **beautiful bazaar, Ganj Ali Khan wax museum, Old Mosque, and theological school** dating from the 17th century. Return to the *Hotel* for dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Thursday, April 17

Kerman - Shiraz



Begin the day with a drive to **Shiraz**, the city of nightingales, historic monuments, poets and philosophers, warriors, kings, and orchards; visiting en route the **Sassanian Palace at Sarvestan**, the 5th century AD structure is thought by many to be a hunting lodge or small palace built by Bahram V (420-440 AD). Continue to Shiraz, passing through the majestic mountainous routes and seeing two large salt lakes. Welcome to **Shiraz**, the present-day capital of the Fars Province, the heartland of Iran, which gave its name to the Persian language: Farsi. Shiraz is situated on a plain surrounded by two mountain ranges. The city is well known for its mild climate and friendly people. Transfer to *Homa Hotel* or similar for check-in and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Friday, April 18

Shiraz



Begin a full-day tour of Shiraz, paying respect to the **Garden and Tomb of the beloved poet Hafez**. Have your

fortune read and make a wish! Visit some of the famous gardens of this "City of Roses and Nightingales," including **Nasir-ol-Molk**, the pink-tiled 19th-century mosque and Qajar period **Narenjestan Garden/House** (or Qavam House) with its beautiful mirror work and elegant wooden features. We enjoy lunch at the famous Haft Khan Restaurant. Then head to **Vakil Bath**, which includes the **Arg of Karim Khan, Vakil Bazaar, Vakil Mosque**, and many administrative buildings. Return to the *Hotel* for dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Saturday, April 19

Shiraz (Persepolis & Pasargadae)



Get ready for a truly wonderful day! After breakfast, we will drive about 35 miles to **Takht-e Jamshid** or, as the Greeks called it, Persepolis, a ruined capital of ancient Iran, where we will explore the **Gate of Xerxes**, the **Apadana Palace**, the **Treasury**, the **Harem**, and the **private palaces** of the different rulers. Xerxes and Artaxerxes I, who ruled Persia in the 5th century BC, completed Persepolis. Head to visit **Naghsh-é-Rostam**, which contains the rock-carved chambers of four Achaemenian tombs, believed to be those of Darius the Great, Xerxes, Artaxerxes, and Darius II. The ornamental facades are rock reliefs from the Sassanian dynasty depicting various scenes of imperial conquests. Later, explore **Pasargadae**, the capital of Cyrus the Great, and the site of his simple but imposing tomb before returning to Shiraz via the **Quran Gate** and **Jahan Nama Seljuk Garden**. Return to the *Hotel* for dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Sunday, April 20

Shiraz - USA



Enjoy breakfast then transfer to the airport for your flight back to the US. **(B)**

*"We reserve the right to change the order of activities/visits or sites due to unexpected events such as flight cancellations or changes of schedule, or any other reasons beyond our control. We will do our best to ensure that any necessary changes when/if needed to meet the needs of our clients."*

#### **Special Notes on Travel to Iran:**

*We will be covering great distances by road during this journey. The roads are excellent, and the air-conditioned bus is very comfortable. You will often be served cold water, tea, and fruits along the way. We will make several rest stops (some will not be five-star bathrooms, and others will be in the beautiful wilderness). It is essential to recognize the exhausting nature of some long driving days and some site visits where you might have to walk on uneven terrain. By signing up for this tour, participants are acknowledging their complete understanding and acceptance of all terms and conditions and are admitting that they are in good physical and mental health and are equipped with an open mind, a sense of adventure, and a tolerant and patient spirit to cope with the tour.*



## Tour Cost (Land Only):

4 - 7 travelers: \$7,495.00

8 - 14 travelers: \$6,495.00

*Per person sharing in double occupancy*

**Single Supplement: \$1,195.00**

*Price based on group size minimum of 4 participants and maximum of 14 participants*

**Trip Grade: II    Lodging Level: \*\*\*-\*\*\*\***



### Tour Includes:

- Airport / Hotel / Airport transfers.
- Accommodation at deluxe and first-class properties in most cities & superior tourist class hotels in smaller towns.
- Travel by modern A/C motor coach.
- Meals as mentioned in the itinerary (B: Breakfast, L: Lunch and D: Dinner).
- All Tours as per itinerary & entrance fees to the sites and museums mentioned.
- Escort of a tour Manager throughout the trip (provided minimum number of travelers is reached).
- English Speaking local guide.
- A bottle of water per passenger per day on touring days plus juice, coffee, and tea on the bus.
- Gratuities to guide, drivers, and porters (provided minimum number of travelers is reached).

### Tour does not include:

- International airfare USA-Tehran / Shiraz-USA.
- Iran Visa (Currently obtainable from the embassy in Washington DC for \$160.00 - subject to change).
- Items of a personal nature (camera fees, laundry, excess luggage, etc.).
- Transfers if not arriving/departing on tour dates.
- Dayroom/overnights necessitated by changes in airline schedules or misconnections.
- Trip surcharge to operate below required minimum participants.
- Travel protection insurance. (HIGHLY RECOMMENDED)

### Trip Grade

**II Active** - Some hikes, slightly more demanding walks at or to sites, few elevations, comfortable but busy schedule and some long rides and extensive drives.

### Lodging Level

**\*\*\* Superior** - Lodges and hotels with additional amenities, refined service, and comfort level acceptable to western standards. (3 or 4 stars)

**\*\*\*\* Luxury** - Regular style- usually large- hotels, typical western standard with ample venues, and full amenities. (4 or 5 stars)

