

# EXPLORE!

**BEST SELLER**

**Treasures of Iran**  
14 days

Iran - Trip code IR

## Treasures of Iran

This comprehensive tour uncovers the treasures of ancient Persia whilst offering a fabulous insight into life in modern day Iran. We visit sites including the Towers of Silence in Yazd, the impressive cliff-face rock tombs at Naqsh-e Rostam and the Persian city ruins at Persepolis. Time is spent exploring the bustling capital city, Tehran and soaking up the atmosphere of the impressive Imam Square in Isfahan, where we'll experience the warmth and hospitality of the Iranian people.

## Trip highlights

### ACCOMMODATION GRADE:

#### Standard

Our standard, mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service, often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en suite facilities.

### TRIP PACE:

#### Moderate

Moderate pace tours are ideal if you want a holiday which combines exciting activities and experiences with plenty of time to relax and unwind. Typically you'll be active and busy for part of the day but then also have time to rest and recharge your batteries.

**GROUP SIZE:****12 - 18**

Maximum group size ranges from between 6 to 20 people, depending on the type of trip, the transport and accommodation used and activities included. We rarely have groups that are smaller than five or six people and the average is 12 people plus an Explore leader.

# Itinerary

Itineraries on some departure dates may differ, please select the itinerary that you wish to explore.

## DAY 1 - Join trip in Tehran

The trip starts this evening in Tehran, the capital of Iran.



**Accommodation: Kowsar Hotel** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

## DAY 2 - Exploring in Tehran

Many flights arrive into Tehran in the early hours of this morning. For those arriving on one of these flights there will be time to freshen up and possibly a short sleep before we begin our exploration of the city. Tehran is a sprawling, modern city, which has only been the capital for 200 years. However, 20% of Iran's population live here and it's an ideal place to get accustomed to the Iranian way of life, with the best restaurants and museums in the country. This afternoon, we have a city sightseeing tour to include the National Museum, also known as the Museum of Ancient Iran, where we learn of Persia's 2,500-year history, from the expansion under Cyrus the Great in 550 BC, the Persian Wars during Darius I reign, to Alexander the Great and the burning of Persepolis in 330 BC. There are also excellent exhibits from the 600 years of Arab control until the 13th century. We also visit the wonderful Golestan Palace to explore the a complex of 17 royal structures boasting stained glass windows, mirrored ceilings and marble thrones.



**Accommodation: Kowsar Hotel** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 3 - Travel down to Yazd

Today we leave Tehran and have a full day driving south, through the desert to Yazd. We break the journey in Naien, stopping for lunch and visiting the Jame Mosque. The ancient mosque is still in use today and has some beautiful stucco work on the mihrab, the niche in the mosque wall that indicates the direction of Mecca. After visiting the mosque we continue on to Yazd. The city is known

for its Zoroastrian culture but is most famous for its wind towers and the city is dotted with small houses winged by wind catchers used to cool the local's homes.



**Accommodation: Daad Hotel** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 4 - In Yazd, visit the Towers of Silence and Zoroastrian fire temples

This morning we visit the Towers of Silence, built on a hilltop outside the town, these traditional Zoroastrian burial grounds are where bodies were quickly returned to nature by being devoured by vultures. Continuing our exploration of the Zoroastrian culture, we visit the Ateshkade or 'Zoroastrian Fire Temple'. Predating Christianity by many centuries, the Zoroastrians were possibly the first to believe in an omnipotent God. In the temple we see a flame that has burnt continually for more than 1500 years. The afternoon is left free to explore the famed old city. Described by many as a living museum, the clay-brick houses and ancient Islamic buildings, seemingly woven together in a maze of narrow alleys, are best discovered wandering on foot.



**Accommodation: Daad Hotel** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 5 - Head to Shiraz, stop at an ice house and a 4000 year old cypress tree

Today we have a full day's drive to Shiraz, stopping on the way for interesting sights. As we leave Yazd, we will see a series of qanats (deep underground channels), that used to provide water to Yazd and many towns in the area. We will also stop at a Yakhchal (ice house), a domed structure with a large subterranean area used to store ice in the middle of the desert. As we continue our journey we will visit Abarkuh and see its famous ancient cypress tree, thought to be over four thousand years old. It is over 25 metres high and has a circumference of 18m.



**Accommodation: Arg Hotel** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 6 - In Shiraz, explore the Narenjestan gardens and the Nasir Al-Molk Mosque

Today we enjoy spending time exploring some of Shiraz's many treasures. First we will visit the Narenjestan gardens home to the Narenjestan-e Ghavam pavillion, built between 1879 and 1886, as part of a complex owned by some of Shiraz's wealthiest Qa'jar-era families. From here we take a short walk to the Nasir al-Molk Mosque, a highlight of the trip. The mosque has stained glass windows which, in the morning illuminate the room with a kaleidoscope of colours and just sitting in the corner in this ambient

atmosphere has got to be good for one's soul. The rest of the day is free to explore Shiraz. There are plenty of sites to discover, you may choose to visit Saadi's Tomb in the north-east of Shiraz or maybe enjoy the historic Eram Gardens. Shiraz is known as the friendliest city in Iran, which in a country full of smiling happy people is some accolade! Iranians love to find out where you are from and ensure you are enjoying their hospitality, so walking around Shiraz is a real pleasure with lots of fun conversations and interactions.



**Accommodation: Arg Hotel** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 7 - Visit Naqsh-e Rostam and the legendary Persepolis

Today we start out early to drive to the rock hewn royal tombs of Naqsh-e-Rostam where Darius I and his successors are buried. We spend time exploring the site, before continuing on to Persepolis. Situated in high steppe-land, the legendary capital of Darius the Great was founded in 512 BC. There was no more impressive construction in the ancient world, except perhaps Karnak in Egypt. Darius built the terrace, the Apadana (great audience hall), the Tachana (palace), the monumental staircases and his son, Xerxes, added the harem and the Hall of 100 columns. Though a shadow of its former self, the soaring pillars, terraces and sculptures of Persepolis cannot fail to stir the imagination of any visitor. The remainder of the day is left free for you to explore Shiraz, and try some of the local delicacies including the shirazi salad, a spicy, healthy and tasty accompaniment to a chicken kebab.



**Accommodation: Arg Hotel** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 8 - Visit the palaces and pavilions in Pasargade, drive to Isfahan

Leaving Shiraz behind us, we head north on our way to Isfahan, stopping at the ruins of Pasargadae, where Cyrus the Great built his capital. Side porticoes graced the columned halls of the two palaces and flowing watercourses ran amongst his beautiful palaces and pavilions. This ambrosial pleasure garden and its architectural delights created the ideal location for a ceremonial centre hosting successive coronations. Although quickly superseded by Persepolis, Pasargadae has enchanted travellers through the ages - including Alexander the Great. The drive will take us most of the day and we should arrive to Isfahan with time for a quick walk along the river to Sio Se Pol Bridge, which is lit up at night and is a favoured place for young Iranians to meet and catch up.



**Accommodation: Sheykhbahaei Hotel** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 9 - Explore stunning Isfahan, including the Shah Mosque, regarded as the masterpiece of Persian architecture

Undoubtedly a highlight of any trip to Iran, Isfahan is laden with an embarrassment of beautiful architecture, squares, parks and bazaars. We will first head to Imam square, one of the largest city squares in the world that is surrounded by lavishly decorated mosques and dotted with fountains; it is also a popular place for local residents for picnics and socialising. We will spend most of the day in and around the square and our first stop is the Ali Qapu Palace which has a balcony overlooking the square. We then cross the square and enter Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque, known as the ladies mosque; it has an ornately painted domed ceiling and an elaborately decorated entrance. From here we will visit the Shah's mosque, regarded as a masterpiece of Persian architecture and along with the square, is classified as UNESCO World Heritage site. Today we will also visit the Chehel Sotun Palace and have time to explore the extensive bazaar complex, which snakes for four kilometres from its beginning in the square.



**Accommodation: Sheykhbahaei Hotel** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 10 - Free day to enjoy the beautiful city of Isfahan at your leisure

Today is left free for you to further explore this gorgeous city at your leisure; however there is an optional sightseeing trip that visits the Armenian Vank church, pigeon tower and shaking minerate. Isfahan has a thriving carpet industry and is well known for its vast collections, for those thinking about making a purchase, this is the best city. Tonight there is the option to experience zurkhaneh, a traditional strength and wrestling event. Though visitors are allowed to enter for a fee, this is a part of Iranian culture where locals work out and wrestle whilst a leader bangs the drums, sings and reads poetry.



**Accommodation: Sheykhbahaei Hotel** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 11 - To the mountain village of Abyaneh, on the slopes of Mount Karas

We drive to the mountain village of Abyaneh. Located at 2500m on the slopes of Mount Karas, this fascinating village is dominated by steep twisting lanes, and tightly packed red-coloured houses constructed from mud brick and clay, with wooden lattice windows. Seemingly unaffected by uprisings suffered by other parts of Persia, Abyaneh has remained intact since Safavid times with the inhabitants retaining their ancient customs, many still wearing traditional clothing. We will explore the town and spend the evening in a quirky hotel, often surrounded by snow peaked hills and mountains.



**Accommodation: Abyaneh Hotel** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available

## DAY 12 - Return to Tehran via Kashan, famous for traditional silk and textile weaving

We head towards Tehran, driving through the arid desert to a place called Kashan, an oasis town where carpet, silk and textile weaving are the traditional crafts. It was from Kashan that the Three Wise Men reputedly started their epic journey to Bethlehem, underlying the historical importance of this ancient trade town. Here we discover some of the finest traditional houses in Iran. Funded by wealthy merchants, architects employed techniques to minimize the effects of severe seasonal climatic variations, giving the buildings their distinct characters. We include a visit to the exquisite Fin Garden as well as the House of Boroujerdi; the fine courtyard and intricate workmanship offering an insight into early 19th Century Iran. We continue on from there by bus to Tehran.



**Accommodation: Kowsar Hotel** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

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## DAY 13 - In Tehran; further exploration of this atmospheric city

Today we have one last day to soak up the atmosphere of Tehran, revisit places we have seen or perhaps do some last minute bargain hunting. There is also the opportunity to do an optional sightseeing tour to visit the palaces of Saad Abad and Niavaran.



**Accommodation: Kowsar Hotel** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast and Dinner

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## DAY 14 - Trip ends in Tehran

Our trip ends in Tehran this morning after breakfast.



Meals Provided: Breakfast

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## Why book this trip

The Iran tourism industry is really starting to bounce back after years of isolation, so it is an ideal time to go before the inevitable crowds come. This holiday to Iran is a great way of experiencing the famous hospitality of the locals whilst seeing all the fantastic sights of this fascinating country.

## What's included?



### Included meals

Breakfast: 13  
Dinner: 1



### Transport

Bus



### Trip staff

Explore Tour Leader  
Driver(s)  
Local Guide(s)



### Accommodation

13 nights standard hotel

## Trip information

### Country information

### Iran Holidays & Tours

#### Climate

Much of Iran is arid desert and mountain. The harsh climate has great extremes of heat and cold between summer and winter. Average annual rainfall is below 25cm and usually confined to winter and spring. Summer (Apr- Oct) is very hot, whilst winter temperatures can reach -4. Spring and autumn are best.

#### Time difference to GMT

+3.5

#### Plugs

2 Pin Round

#### Religion

Islam

Language

Persian

## Budgeting and packing

### Optional activities

In all towns on this trip there is free time to explore, however optional sightseeing excursions can also be organised and paid for locally. Tehran - Saad abad palace and the glass museum - 25USD Yazd - Jame Mosque and Doltabad gardens - 15USD Shiraz - Citadel, Saadi Tomb and Nagshe rejab - 30 USD Isfahan - Vank Church, Pigeon tower and Shaking minerate - 30USD

### Clothing

Dress code in Iran Iran is a traditional Islamic country and a strict dress code is enforced throughout the tour. Women: Head - A headscarf must be worn by women at all times, preferably tied under the chin. Some hair can be shown. Arms - must be covered by long sleeves Feet - Any comfortable footwear is acceptable In cold weather it is useful to have a cardigan which you can wear over your manteau and easily remove Manteau - long coathirt The Manteau should be dark coloured and unpatterned, hiding the shape of the body and must be knee length. It is best to purchase a manteau or similar such as a 3/4 length cotton coat that hides your shape prior to your arrival in Iran. A long baggy mens shirt can be used instead of an overcoat, but the above principles must apply. We recommend one cotton or linen length manteau for the south and a warmer one for the north. However, if it is not possible to purchase, long dark shirts/ coat will suffice. Legs - should be covered by trousers or a long skirt below the manteau Underneath the 'manteau' anything can be worn! April to September can be hot (approx. 30 degrees plus) - A bra and light cotton trouserskirt is sufficient. Pack for hot conditions during this period of the year. March, October, November can be cold (approx. 12 degrees) - warmer clothing is needed under the manteau and you will need a warm fleece or jacket for cold nights. Bring waterproofs between Oct-Apr. The 'chador' - black 'coverall' - is only worn at holy shrines and can be borrowed locally. Dress code is more relaxed in some towns and brighter garments are being worn by young locals. Men: Men must wear long trousers. Short sleeved shirts are acceptable but most Iranian men wear full length sleeves. April to September can be hot (approx. 30 degrees plus) - Pack for hot conditions during this period of the year. March, October, November can be cold (approx. 12 degrees) - warmer clothing is needed, you will need a warm fleece or jacket for cold nights. Bring waterproofs between Oct-Apr. You may find when you arrive in Iran that some local Iranians do not dress as traditionally or strictly as we have suggested above. Explore feels that it is socially correct for our travellers to be responsible in the way they travel and respect all country traditions so we would advise that you try to stick to our advice as closely as possible and then once in Iran you can make your own decisions as to how much is appropriate to cover. Your Leader can also advise you on this in each location.

### Footwear

Comfortable shoes/boots are recommended.

### Luggage

20kg

### Luggage: On tour

One main piece of baggage and a daypack. Total allowance: 44lbs/20kgs.

### Equipment

Bring a waterbottle, torch and a universal plug for hotel basins. A small foldable shoulder bagatchel for museums, as most do not permit backpacks only handbags and bags of a similar size. As there are no recycling facilities for plastics in this area, to cut down on waste plastic resulting from buying bottled water (tap water is ok to drink in Iran).

### Tipping

#### Explore leader

Tour Leader: At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Tour Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

#### Local crew

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognized part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. Accordingly, you should allow approx. £20.00 for tipping.

### Country Information



## Iran Holidays & Tours

### Food and drink

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 price**

£7

**Dinner price**

£10

**Water price**

£0.90 Please note that alcohol is not available within the country of Iran.

### Foreign Exchange

**Local currency**

Rials.

**Recommended Currency For Exchange**

Major hard currencies are accepted in the main cities but we advise taking all of your spending money in GBP, Euro or US\$ cash (Travellers Cheques can be hard to change). Once you arrive in Iran there will be no way for you to get any extra money so please make sure you bring plenty with you so that you do not run out.

**Where To Exchange**

Currency exchange is available in most major towns and cities

**ATM Availability**

do NOT work with foreign cards

**Credit Card Acceptance**

Accepted in some of tourist shops in Isfahan but please do not rely on this as it is not always possible

**Travellers Cheques**

Very hard to change.

## Transport, Accommodation & Meals

### Transport Information

Bus

### Accommodation notes

**Booking a Single Room**

All of our group tours are planned and operated on a twin-share basis, meaning that the standard cost is based either on individual travellers sharing accommodation with another group member of the same sex, or people who book together sharing accommodation. Please refer to the tour notes where the single room option availability is detailed on a night by night basis for this tour, and the price for the available nights is detailed on the dates & prices tab by departure date. For Self-Guided trips the Single Room supplement offers the option of a single room each and is charged per person. The Single Room supplement also applies to the third person in a party of three that will be accommodated in a single room.

Due to the high numbers of visitors to Iran and the limited tourism infrastructure we are finding that on occasion hotels may cancel our reservations at short notice. While we do all possible to avoid this, there is a chance you will be subject to some accommodation changes during your trip. Any changes made will be to an accommodation of equal or a higher standard. We are confident that any changes to your accommodation will not detract from your enjoyment of this incredible country.

## Essential information

## FCO Advice

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice [click here](#).

For more information from Explore about travel advice, [click here](#)

### Under 18 immigration guidance

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

## Essential Information

Once your booking has been confirmed we guarantee the price will not increase, whatever the circumstances. Before booking please ensure you have read our important tour pricing information. [Booking Conditions](#)

## Visa Information

An Iran visa is required by all nationalities, and must be arranged prior to travel. Please consult with your nearest Iran Consulate for further, up to date information regarding the visa process, costs and any relevant supporting documentation that you will need to supply. Part of the Iran Visa process is to obtain an authorisation code/invitational letter from the local Iranian authorities. All nationalities will require this. Explore will request this on your behalf at the earliest 3 months prior to departure, the local Iran authorities will not process any requests sent through outside of their 2 month process time. All visa authorisation code/invitational letters arranged by Explore are on a group visa basis which does not permit any independent travel within the country and requires for all traveller to be on an arranged tour with a tour leader at all times. Please note the various process times depending on your nationality: British, American and Canadian: Minimum of 25 working days All other nationalities: Minimum of 10 working days In order for Explore to obtain the necessary authorisation code/invitation letter on your behalf, we will require a clear colour copy of your passport to reach us 12 weeks before you travel. In addition to the colour copy of your passport, you'll also need to supply us with further personal information including a head and shoulders digital photograph of the applicant in front of a white area, a C.V./resume (max. 2 pages), username information for all social media websites you are a member of, and email and telephone contact details (please provide the same information you will provide on your visa application form). Explore will be in contact with you regarding this information no later than 12 weeks before you travel. If you have made your booking between 10-12 weeks before you travel we require your personal details immediately. You can submit your application for your visa, once Explore has obtained your authorisation code/invitational letter and sent it through to you. Please note, if you intend using the London or Dublin Consulate, then we strongly recommend to contact them first to confirm that they have your authorisation code/invitational letter or alternatively to wait a minimum of 3 working days after you have received your authorisation code before attending the Consulate. Please do this before you attend the consulate, as they will not accept your application if they have not received your authorisation code/invitation letter from the local Iranian authorities. For non-UK residents, please contact your nearest consulate for the most up to date information on visa costs and required documentation as this can vary depending on your nationality and country of residence. Most Consulates provide a 5-7 working day visa processing service. For UK residents, applications are only accepted in person at the London or Dublin Consulate. Please note that you'll need to submit 2 passport photos (women need to wear a head scarf for these photos), along with your passport and visa application form to The Iranian Consulate in London or Dublin. Currently the London Consulate is charging approximately £170.00 per person for the visa. Please note, any women attending the London or Dublin Consulate in person will need to wear a head scarf. Please ensure that your passport has a minimum of 6 months validity from the date of return to your home country. Please note that any passport that contains an endorsement or a visa for Israel or stamps from other countries' border crossing points with Israel, regardless of whether it has expired, will not be accepted. Iran has a strict visa process with some extensive background checks on all applicants, and may reject an application for numerous reasons including but not limited to sensitive occupations linked to politics; the media; military. If your visa request is rejected by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Iran then Explore will provide a voucher for all recoverable costs. Please be aware that entry may also be refused to some countries if your passport bears stamps or visas (valid or expired) from certain countries. Please bear this in mind when booking/traveling to certain destinations as it can negatively affect your future travel plans. All visa information is subject to regular change, so please check with your local consulate for the most up to date advice for the countries you intend to visit.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may consider applying through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See [www.travcour.com](http://www.travcour.com) to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on 0208 5431846.

## Booking conditions

Before booking your Explore trip, please ensure that you read both our [Essential Information](#) and [Booking Conditions](#).

## Transfers

[Find out more about Trip Transfer Terms and Conditions before you book.](#)

### Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found below in the dates and prices information.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer.

### **Joining Tour Abroad**

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer [click here](#)

## **Insurance**

It is a condition of booking with Explore 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. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

Read more information about what travel insurance is required.

## **Flight information**

Explore offers a wide range of flexible flying options to make joining and leaving our trips easy. [Read more about them here.](#)

### **Flight Information**

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

### **Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore**

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

## **Iran Holidays & Tours**

### **Vaccinations**

Nothing compulsory, we recommend protection against malaria, typhoid, tetanus, diphtheria, polio and hepatitis A. Consult your travel clinic for latest advice on different prophylaxis available against malaria. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/> and from your local healthcare provider.

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