

Wantok Adventures
EXPLORING THE RIVERS OF IRAN
Another first with Richard Bangs & John Yost
Class III
May 8-20, 2018

Sobek Expeditions, led by Richard Bangs and John Yost, opened up as many as 50 countries around the world to whitewater rafting. Sometimes this required first descents of new rivers and sometimes there were local rafters who could organize first commercial trips to a new area. Still hungry for more, they've joined with a partner in Iran to create the first American commercial rafting trip there.

Two characteristics will make this a different experience than many we've undertaken. Ancient Persia boasted one of the most sophisticated civilizations in the world, resulting in a plethora of archeological and historical wonders to appreciate, so we devote several of our days to bazaars, mosques, palaces and museums. Iran is very dry and relatively flat, not ideal conditions for multi-day river expeditions, so we weave four day trips in the mountains of the southwest into our Iranian tapestry to satisfy that rafting itch. The resulting combination yields an in-depth appreciation of this oft-misunderstood and under-appreciated land.

Highlights of the ancient Persia aspect of the trip include a day tour of Tehran's palaces, museums and bazaar; the beautiful 12,000-year-old city of Kashan; and the mosques, palaces, Zoroastrian temple, bridges and bazaars of Isfahan. We spread out these treats along our drive to the remote village area where we find four wild rivers to raft: The Zayande Rood, Armand, Khersan and Karoon all await the strokes of our paddles. Each is fun and exciting and none is threatening, and no prior rafting experience is needed to safely enjoy them.

We stay in 4-5 star hotels in the cities and are welcomed into the homes of locals during the rafting program. There is no camping and little roughing it, as we have indoor comforts and fine food every night. We have great English-speaking Iranian guides on the road, at the historical sites and on the river. Sure sounds good! Read on for the daily detail of the trip. I'm sure you'll want to join us.

Itinerary

Day 1, May 8 Arrival in Tehran

You'll be met by a Wantok representative on arrival in Tehran airport and taken to our hotel. At 6 pm we'll meet in the lobby for introductions and a trip briefing. After the briefing we'll head out for a group welcome dinner.

Esteghlal Hotel, dinner only

Day 2, May 9 Tehran

After breakfast we'll set out on a full day tour of Teheran. We visit the National Museum, chock-full of Iran's rich history. Its collection includes ceramics, pottery, stone figures and carving. Then the Golestan Royal Complex palaces, a UNESCO World Heritage Site with 17 architecturally and artistically delightful buildings followed by the wild maze of the traditional bazaar and the temptation of all kinds of handicrafts, and a carpet museum where we learn all about Persian carpets (and will no doubt be offered many for sale). Lunch and dinner are on your own.

Esteghlal Hotel, breakfast only

Day 3, May 10 Tehran - Isfahan (430 Km)

It's about a five hour drive to Isfahan. On the way we stop to visit Kashan, one of the oldest cities of Iran with 12,000 years of history. Kashan is the first of the large oases on the road which runs along the edge of the central deserts of Iran. Its charm is partly due to the contrast between the parched immensities of the deserts and the greenery of the well-tended oasis. Archeological discoveries in the Sialk Hillocks to the west reveal that this region was one of the primary centers of civilization in pre-historic ages. In addition to Sialk we visit two beautiful residences, Tabatabai and Boroujerdi. Tabatabai features delightful wall paintings with elegant stained glass windows and includes other classic signatures of Traditional Persian residential architecture such as biruni and andaruni, as well as working wind towers. Boroujerdi offers a rectangular beautiful courtyard, delightful wall paintings by the royal painter Sani ol Molk, and three 40 meter tall wind towers which help cool the house to unusually cool temperatures. It has 3 entrances, and all the classic signatures of traditional Persian residential architecture. And at Fin Garden, one of the most beautiful historical gardens of the Middle East, replete with refreshing water features. After lunch in Kashan we continue on to Isfahan and our hotel, the Abbassi, which claims to be the oldest in the world and is certainly one of the finest in Iran.

Abbassi Hotel, breakfast & lunch

Day 4, May 11 Isfahan

Full day tour program in Isfahan, the most famous attraction in Iran, visiting its historical sites: Naghsh-e-Jahan Square, Imam & Sheikh Lotfolah mosques, the traditional bazaar, Alighapoo Palace, Chehel Sotoon and Hasht Behesht palaces and the bridges over Zayande Rood. All the magnificence of the art, architecture and ornamentation of these monuments is too much to describe here. Suffice to say that you will be overwhelmed by the intricate tile work, the delicacy of the towers and minarets, the grace of the arches and domes, and the vastness of the achievement of the builders of this amazing city. We'll enjoy a traditional Iranian meal in the evening.

Abbassi Hotel, breakfast and lunch

Day 5, May 12 Isfahan - Shahre Kord (100 Km)

It's not possible to do justice to Isfahan in a short visit, but we'll use this morning to see as much more of the city as we can. On our list for today are 1000-year-old Jameh mosque, the grand religious center of Isfahan, another World Heritage Site; Astashga, an archeological site of an ancient Zoroastrian fire temple; and the Monar Jonban mausoleum famed for its shaking minarets, a architectural oddity of simultaneous oscillation.

After lunch in Isfahan, we continue to Shahre Kord, the capital of Chaharmahal & Bakhtiary province and our hotel.

Parsian Hotel, breakfast and lunch

Day 6, May 13 Shahre Kord - Saman – River put-in

We start early for the short drive to Saman village and meet with our river crew for another short drive to the put-in at Haji Abab village. After the usual safety talk and gear distribution we'll get on the Class II Zayande Rood at about 10:00. Not far downriver we savor a riverside lunch on a white sand beach. After lunch we continue our easy rafting to Savad Jan village (20 Km) and then drive to a traditional Iranian house for the night. Like all of our home stays on this part of our journey, it's clean, pleasant and equipped with modern bath facilities. The home-cooked Iranian meals are a special treat.

Home stay, all meals

Day 7, May 14 Rafting

After a hearty breakfast prepared by our guide, we head downriver for more adventures over 20 more kilometers of this enticing river. Near the beginning of the rafting program we visit Vasey's Paradise (named after a similar spot on the Grand Canyon by some well-travelled rafter), a spectacular cascade of water that supports a lush hanging garden. Three hours of rafting on the mild whitewater of Zayande Rood we stop for lunch of Iranian lamb kebabs on a white stone beach. After two more hours on the river we take out and return to Saman, a lovely verdant city where we stay at a local house beside the river.

Home stay, all meals

Day 8, May 15 Saman - Lordegan - Armand area (200 Km)

After breakfast we head off for our drive to our next river, the Armand. On the way we visit the protected area of Helen near the town of Lordegan, covering 400,000 square kilometers with different kind of trees and wild and domestic animals, the beautiful mountain-ringed Choga Khor lagoon, and Atashgah waterfall. Our destination is Madaen village where we will once again by guests in a local house.

Home stay, all meals

Day 9, May 16 Armand River

After a fresh breakfast in the heart of nature we'll start our adrenalin-filled rafting experience on the wild whitewater of the Armand. It's an unforgettable 20 kilometers stretch of exciting Class III rafting, broken up with a nice lunch on a sandy river beach with lovely views of the tree-covered Zagros mountain range. After a short afternoon of rafting we'll head to our local house in middle of nature where you can see millions of bright stars at night.

Home stay, all meals

Day 10, May 17 Armand - Karoon Dam area

It's a short drive (15 kms) to today's rafting adventure on the Karoon River. For anyone into it, there's an opportunity to jump off high cliffs into deep water, and all of us will journey to see the Karoon Dam, the largest in Iran and also the fifth largest in the world. The Karoon is the largest river in Iran and bumps us up another notch in excitement with about 5 hours on the river highlighted by Class III+ rapids. Of course a delicious Iranian lunch with our crew beside the river, in the fresh air of the countryside.

Tonight we are back to hotel accommodations. Dinner is from the Iranian menu at the hotel.

Parsian Hotel, all meals

Day 11, May 18 Karoon - Khersan river

Today we end our rafting with the Class IV+ whitewater of the Khersan River, the apex of our steadily mounting river challenges. We guarantee it'll get your adrenaline pumping, and provide a memorable and fitting end to the river part of our journey. It's an hour drive to put-in, about 4 hours of rafting plus the usual pleasant lunch break, then we head back to our hotel for another delicious dinner and the night.

Parsian Hotel, all meals

Day 12, May 19 Isfahan – Tehran

This morning we get in our vehicles for the drive to Isfahan and on to Tehran, about 650 kms (400 miles) and 8 hours. The rest of the day is on your own after we check into our hotel. We'll enjoy a group farewell dinner where we can swap tales of our Iranian adventure.

Esteghlal Hotel, all meals

Day 13, May 20 Departure

Transfers are provided to the international airport for departure.

Breakfast only

Dates & Prices

May 8-20, 2018

\$4350 per person double occupancy for 8-10 persons
\$4100 per person double occupancy for 11-13 persons
\$3800 per person double occupancy for 14-20 persons

Minimum group size 8, maximum 20

Single supplement cost \$300 if requested; \$200 if you request a shared room but we cannot arrange one.

What's Included

- ◆ Wantok leadership on the trip and planning assistance before it
- ◆ accommodations in hotel in cities and home stays in villages
- ◆ all arrangements in the field, including meals, guides, group gear and rafting equipment
- ◆ all meals from dinner Day 1 to breakfast Day 13
- ◆ drinking water throughout the tour
- ◆ airport transfers on group arrival and departure days
- ◆ sightseeing and activities as noted in the itinerary
- ◆ ground transportation
- ◆ mosque and monument entrance fees

What's Not

Excluded from the basic trip cost are

- ◆ international airfare
- ◆ insurance (see Insurance section below)
- ◆ optional tipping off-river and to leader, guides and river staff
- ◆ airport transfers if arriving earlier or later than trip date
- ◆ personal items like drinks, laundry, souvenirs, etc.

About Us

Wantok, a word from the *Tok Pisin* language of Papua New Guinea, literally means "someone who speaks my language", which by implication means someone from the same village or nearby, and by extension a friend or a mate. We, a group of veteran international river runners, chose the name to celebrate the spirit of camaraderie that brought us together. We are not a business in the traditional sense. We cooperate to create and market exciting river trips.

Our goal is to bring you great whitewater at great values, maintaining the highest standards of professionalism and safety on the water while minimizing the tendency towards luxury of the large adventure companies. We think trip participants are fully capable of being a bit more self-reliant, that 3-4 star hotels with lots of local flavor are preferable to the big chains, that a great meal in a lively local restaurant is more enjoyable than the same meal in a fancy tourist place, and that a sense of adventure should be part of every trip.

Our price structure is simple, omitting the many hundreds of dollars others add on to every booking to pay for their printing, their mailings, their offices, and their staff. We devise the best and most cost-effective itineraries and negotiate the lowest fair price with the best local operators to offer you a terrific trip at a good price. A local outfitter, our guides, and you— that's all we need!

World Rivers Program

For years travelers have been visiting the great ruins, monuments and cultural attractions of the world. Their more adventurous cousins have been going to the same countries to challenge the rapids of whitewater rivers. Why not combine the two, we thought? So now we have. In 2017 we are offering five trips that combine the tourist highlights of a country with rafting on its best rivers, spending most nights in hotels along the way: Peru, Ecuador, Morocco, Japan, Bosnia-Croatia-Montenegro.

This enticing collection of journeys will offer something for everyone who loves the thrills and beauty of a great river. Wantok's encyclopedic knowledge of rivers and river outfitters in a hundred countries, compiled during a lifetime of travel and river exploration, has been applied to devise the very best itineraries with the top operators in these five areas. The trips vary from a scenic immersion in the desert and mountain landscapes of Morocco to rollicking whitewater adventures on the Class IV waters of Peru, and offer choices of oar and paddle boats as well as inflatable kayaks.

Perhaps you'll be lured by the exhilarating whitewater, hot springs spas and magnificent mountains of Hokkaido. The waterfalls, royal palaces, Saharan vistas, millennial archaeology and desert villages of Morocco might catch your fancy, or the prospect of visits to Machu Picchu and Lake Titicaca and a chance to watch the colorful Incan Festival of the Sun may prove irresistible. Maybe Ecuador's snow-capped volcanoes, Amazon rainforest, whitewater-laced Andean canyons, or native culture will spark your imagination. The shocking blue of the limestone-laden waters of the Balkans are tempting too. We're sure that one of these treats will compel you to be among the first to experience this new way of seeing the rivers of the world.

We've chosen rivers that span the seasons as well as the world. You can spend the spring holidays in the warmth of Morocco, the summer solstice at the ancient Incan celebration of Inti Raymi or at the top of a rimstone pool waterfall in Croatia, the fall on the pristine waters of the

Andes and Amazon, or late summer in the hot pools and Buddhist temples of Japan. As the World Rivers program grows, we expect to offer at least one destination every month of the year, taking advantage of the seasons around the world. All of the trips take you out of the US for less than two weeks, and most nights are spent in picturesque hotels and inns as we seek to avoid the blandness of the international hotel chains in favor of small, family-run properties with local flavor and a personal feel.

Sound appealing? All the details you'll need to pick the right trip for yourself are available in on our website, www.wantokadventures.com. Take advantage of the opportunity to tour some of the most interesting countries in the world and get your whitewater fix too. But watch out: Once you try your first Wantok World Rivers trip, you may become addicted.

Insurance

Neither the guides who are part of Wantok nor the entity itself, which is a loose association and not a formally structured business, carries liability, evacuation or other insurance for the participants.

We **VERY STRONGLY** recommend that you check what your current insurance will cover on a trip, and then purchase additional insurance for anything else you feel you need. We particularly advise buying trip cancellation, medical and evacuation insurance in case of last minute changes in plans or a need for emergency medical treatment or evacuation while on the trip. An excellent option is [MedJet](#). At a modest cost they will supply evacuation insurance from anywhere in the world to any hospital, promptly and without questions.

Two sources for trip insurance that we recommend are Travel Guard International at www.travelguard.com and Travelex Insurance at <http://www.travelexinsurance.com/>.

You will be required to sign a liability waiver acknowledging the insurance situation to participate in the trip.

How to Sign Up

A deposit of \$800 per person will hold your seat on this trip.

If you're ready to join the trip, please mail your check for \$800 per person to Wantok at 1678 16th St, Ste B, Oakland CA 94607. If you prefer to pay your deposit by credit card, you can do so via Paypal, www.paypal.com, using our email address wantokadventures@gmail.com to identify us.

You will receive an email on receipt of your deposit with the detailed information on the trip, including a registration form, liability waiver, packing list, and travel details.

Payment, Cancellation & Refunds

Final payment is due 90 days before trip departure.

Final payments using Paypal will be charged an additional 3% of the amount being paid to cover Paypal fees. Checks should be mailed to Wantok, 1678 16th St, Ste B, Oakland CA 94607.

If you cancel your trip up to 90 days before departure, your deposit minus \$250 penalty will be refunded. The penalty rises to \$500 for cancellations received 89-60 days before trip departure. Cancellations between 60 and 30 days before trip departure incur a fee of 50% of trip land cost. No refund will be made for cancellations within 29 days of departure date.

We strongly recommend purchase of trip cancellation insurance (see above).

Questions?

Contact us at wantokadventures@gmail.com or contact the person who sent you this itinerary.

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