

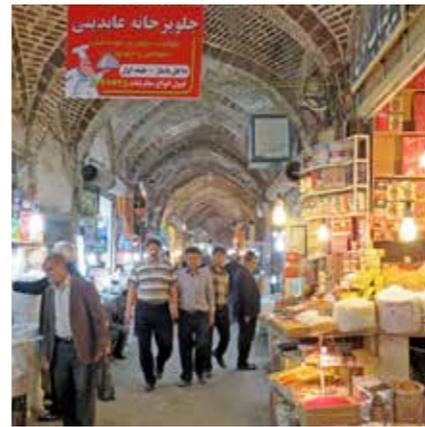
A HISTORY LESSON ON A HARLEY®



H.O.G.® member Rolf Kummer went on a mammoth and memorable round trip from Germany to Iran and back

When I learnt about Cyrus, Darius and Xerxes at school, there arose in me a desire to behold the domains of these great rulers for myself. In 2014 this dream came true. And since I had a Harley-Davidson® motorcycle, bought in 1995, the obvious solution was to make the journey a Harley® tour. Having complete faith in the quality of Milwaukee iron, it did not even enter my head that an old Harley like mine wouldn't be up to the trip. After all, it had taken me to the Caucasus Mountains and back in 2004.

We set off for the Iranian border from the Bavarian Forest, travelling through Graz and Zagreb, along the Croatian coast and on through Montenegro and Albania to Lake Ohrid. From there, it was on through Greece and into Turkey. >



is steeped in history. In Pasargad – another UNESCO World Heritage site – we viewed the tomb of Cyrus the Great.

Our tour took us on to the desert city of Yazd, which we fell in love with. Then we moved on through the Dascht-e Kavir, a great desert of salt flats in the Iranian highlands. After spending some beautiful days in Yazd, we then visited Isfahan, one of the loveliest cities in Iran, with its particularly impressive Imam Square (Meydan-e Imam) with the Jaame Abbasi Mosque, the Ali Qapu Palace, Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque and the Grand Bazaar – all UNESCO World Heritage sites.

On we went through the Dascht-e Kavir desert, where we experienced a night in a desert hotel. Then we travelled on to the Caspian Sea, via Damghan and on to Chalus. The journey that followed, through the Alborz Mountains and on to Qazvin, was glorious. From here we visited the Alamut Valley and Alamut Castle. This valley is among Iran's most beautiful landscapes and is a must-see. From Qazvin our tour took us on through the Alborz mountain range to Ardebil. Here the ►



At Gallipoli we took the ferry across the Dardanelles, then rode on to Bursa and Ankara to reach the Iranian border at Dogubayazit. Torrential rain had so far been a regular feature of our journey. Entry into Iran took just over an hour, but passed without problem. We spent the first night in Maku. First we visited the Armenian monasteries of Saint Thaddeus and Saint Stephanos, a World Heritage site in a remote mountain landscape. We then rode through the Arras Valley to reach Tabriz. Our tour then took us on via Sanandaj to Kermanshah, stopping off at Bisotun and Taq-e Bostan.

Then it was through the mountain ranges to Ahvaz. En route we visited the tomb of Daniel in Susa and the mud brick pyramids at Chogha Zanbil, a royal residence from the Middle Elamite period. From Ahvaz we rode along past oil fields into the mountains to Shiraz, where we spent several days looking around. From Shiraz we reached the highlight of our journey, Persepolis. This was the realisation of my boyhood dream; we spent almost two days exploring this city, which





Sheikh-Safi shrine was particularly worth visiting. From Ardebil we rode to Bazagan, from where we would be crossing back into Turkey the next day.

We rode along the Armenian border via Kars and Ani to Artvin through mountain landscape, which was in places reminiscent of the Alps. We then came to the Black Sea and, with a stop at Persembe, rode along its coast to Inebolu. There we turned inland to Kastamonu and rode on to Bogazkale, where we visited the Hittite capital Hattusa and the natural rock shrine of Yazilikaya.

On to Cappadocia, where we spent two days, through Ankara, where our Harley® reached 100,000 miles, to Istanbul, where we stayed for four days with a friend. Our tour then continued through Bulgaria, Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Austria and back to Germany. We had actually wanted to drive through the Balkan mountain ranges,



but we decided to abandon that plan due to the poor weather forecast.

All in all, it was a uniquely wonderful and interesting journey. We only had positive experiences of Iran; the Iranians are lovely and helpful people. Just one example of this was in Ahvaz, when we asked three young men in a car stopped at a traffic light where we would find the Pars Hotel. They consulted with one another briefly and then told us to follow them. We were surprised that they often stopped to ask policemen. When we arrived at the hotel we realised that they weren't from Ahvaz at all, but from Kermanshah, and so were strangers to the place themselves. We have rarely experienced such kindness as in Iran, and we can only recommend a visit to this beautiful country.

Over 52 days, we travelled 9,576 miles (15,418km) and our Harley ran like clockwork with no problems at all. ■