



The Safavid era (1501-1736) Shah Abbasi caravanserai in the city of Karaj, the capital of Alborz province, is planned to turn into a handicrafts center, the deputy provincial tourism chief has said. The historical inn has been abandoned for a while, but it has the potential to become a center for handicrafts, ISNA quoted Shahram Alimohammadi as saying on Sunday. Last year, provincial tourism chief Fereydoun Mohammadi announced that Karaj eyes to be named a national city of handicrafts. Due to Alborz's status as the capital of tribes and the presence of various ethnic groups living in this region, the handicrafts in this region are of great variety, he said. Being recognized as a hub for handicrafts gives several craftspeople, who are practicing different fields of handicrafts in workshops scattered across the province, the opportunity of promoting their works as well as helping tourism development in the region, the official added.

Karaj's Shah Abbasi Caravanserai to Turn into Handicrafts Center

Harireh Ancient City to Undergo new Round of Excavation

An archaeological project is planned to be commenced on Iran's ancient city of Harireh on the Persian Gulf island of Kish within a month.

Organized by the Research Institute of Cultural Heritage & Tourism (RICHT), in collaboration with the Kish Free Zone Organization, the ultimate aim of the project is to create an archeological atlas of the Persian Gulf coasts and islands, the director of the institute has said.

The ancient city that dates back to the Ilkhanid era (1256-1335) had economic and commercial exchanges with different countries, including China and several African countries, until the Timurid period (1370-1507), Mosayeb Amiri explained on Sunday.

Covering an area of 120 hectares, the city has undergone several excavation surveys so far, he added. In several seasons of excavations, historical mansions, a bathhouse, and a Jameh Mosque have been unearthed; some are now open to tourists, he noted.

Last year, Harireh was added to UNESCO's temporary list, which paves the way for its possible registration as World Heritage.

It is hoped that [possible] inclu-



sion of this city in the World Heritage list with its credits will not only promote the architecture and features of the Persian Gulf ports and historical settlements to the world but will also contribute to the development of tourism in the region. Furthermore, Harireh is registered on the national heritage list. Located in the central, northern part of the island, the 8th-century Harireh offers a glimpse of ancient architecture, and though not much of it remains intact today, the ruins suggest a

once-thriving region. Excavation of this site estimates it having been established around 1000 and abandoned 600 years later. UNESCO has it that Siraf, Kong, Laft, Harireh, and Mokran as architecture and urban planning of the historical ports of Iran in the Persian Gulf, in terms of urban planning, usage of materials, and adaptation to special settings, have had a decisive role and influence on the evolution and promotion of seashore architecture, technology, and urban planning

within the northern margin of the Persian Gulf coast region.

They represent the interaction of human values over time in the cultural context of the world's historical stages. They have witnessed the development of architecture, technology, urban design, and landscape in the northern margin of the Persian Gulf coast region.

Throughout history, great trips have been made to and from these ports by great boats and ships. The connections lead to the junction of the lifestyle of

people and made the combined features of the Indian and African arts besides the Islamic art in the formation of architectural and urban and cultural and artistic components in these ports and then the combined and consolidated patterns extend and have been exported to the other parts of the region. Amongst the Persian Gulf islands, Kish is the more luxurious and developed. Except for its unique nature, such as waters and shallow beaches, the tourist attractions of this charming island are due to its rich historical background as well as its kind and hospitable people. The pristine and beautiful nature, the meeting of land and sea, the clear sky, the pleasant air, and the pleasurable reverberation of the waves create such a sense of calm that one cannot even distinguish between imagination and reality. Nowadays, about one million foreign and domestic tourists travel to the island every year and it is one of the most popular tourist destinations in Iran as it has magnificent attractions such as Kariz Underground City, Harireh Ancient City, Marjan Beach, Bird Garden, Ocean theme park, and Grand Recreational Pier.

Perspective

Cheap Accommodation, A necessity for Mashhad, Official Says

It is essential for Mashhad, the capital of Khorasan Razavi province, to establish cheap accommodation, the provincial tourism chief has said.

It is imperative that travelers to Mashhad find cheap accommodation because of the high prices and rising costs, Seyyed Javad Mousavi explained on Sunday, ISNA reported.



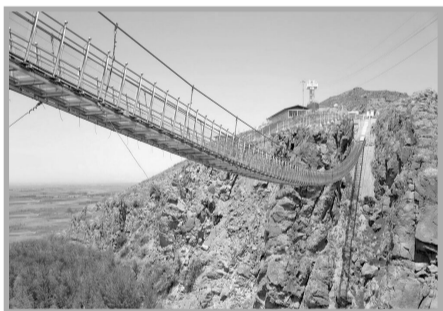
The city of Mashhad is a destination for pilgrimage journeys and should not charge travelers for a wide range of services, the official added.

In return, tourism facilities would be exempt from taxes, but if their occupancy capacity is below 70 percent, they would be required to pay double, he noted.

Mashhad, the capital of Khorasan Razavi province, is Iran's holiest and second-largest city which embraces the shrine complex of the eighth Shia Imam.

Before the coronavirus puts almost everything on lockdown, Mashhad played host to thousands of travelers and pilgrims who come from various Iranian cities, neighboring countries, and even across the globe to visit the holy shrine. Dozens of five-star hotels and hostels are dotted around the holy shrine. The city has also the highest concentration of water parks in the country, and it also embraces a variety of cultural and historical sites that are generally crowded.

Ardabil Boosts Tourism Infrastructure



Ardabil tourism directorate has developed tourism infrastructure across the northwestern province during the current Iranian calendar year (started on March 21), the provincial tourism chief has said. A budget of 770 billion rials (\$2.5 million) has been allocated to the development of tourism in the province so far, Fardin Eini explained. Most of the budget has

been spent on developing access routes to several historical sites and tourist attractions in the region, he noted. Developing tourism infrastructure could encourage the private sector to invest in the tourism sector of the province, the official added. In 2019, Ardabil along with Sari, the capital of Mazandaran province, were selected as the cultural capitals of the Economic Cooperation Organization for 2022 and 2023, respectively. Last April, the tourism authorities of the province announced that they had developed extensive plans to draw more tourists during winter to the province and make it the winter tourism hub of the country. Sprawling on a high, windswept plateau, Ardabil is well-known for having lush natural beauties, hospitable people, and its silk and carpet trade tradition. It is also home to the UNESCO-registered Sheikh Safi al-Din Khaneqah and the Shrine Ensemble. The province is very cold in winter and mild in summer, attracting thousands every year. The capital city of Ardabil is usually recorded as one of the coldest cities in the country in winter.

French Travelers Visit Lesser-known Attractions in Southern Iran



A team of French sightseers has recently toured arrays of lesser-known attractions in the Fahraj county of Fars province, southern Iran. Ten French travelers paid visits to natural sceneries and cultural attractions such as centuries-old castles, and fortresses across the Fahraj county, a local tourism official said. "They also purchased souvenirs from handicraft craft stores." Fahraj has various historical and touristic potential to attract domestic and international sightseers, Hamid Vahidzadeh said. "Moreover, there have been good investments in the realm of tourism infrastructure to meet the needs of our guests," the official said. Based on available data, some 715,000 foreign travelers visited the

ancient country during the first three months of the current Iranian calendar year (started on March 21). Last year, the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts announced that tourism in the country was growing before the corona outbreak, its revenues reached \$11.7 billion in 2019, which accounted for 2.8% of GDP, nearing the average share of tourism in the world GDP, which was 3.2 percent. Iran seeks to reap a bonanza from its numerous tourist spots such as bazaars, museums, mosques, bridges, bathhouses, madrasas, mausoleums, churches, towers, and mansions, of which 26 are inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list.

Iran, Tajikistan Eager to Increase Direct Flights

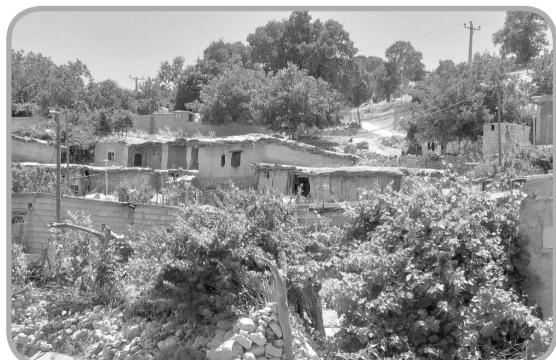
Iran and Tajikistan are eager to increase the number of weekly flights between the two countries, IRNA reported. The issue was raised in Dushanbe in a meeting between the Iranian deputy tourism minister Ali-Asghar Shalabafian and the chairman of the Committee for Tourism Development under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan Tojiddin Jurazoda, the report added. At this meeting, the Tajik side requested that ticket prices be lowered and that more flights be provided from Mashhad and Tehran to Dushanbe, the capital. Ways to deepen tourism ties between the two countries were also discussed during the meeting.

Lesser-known Province to Boost Tourism

Iranian government plans to boost tourism across the southwestern Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad province, IRNA reported. As a second area of livelihood for people in this lesser-known province, the 13th Iranian government has focused on tourism development, the report added. With 250 diverse natural attractions across the province, the tourism industry could invest in entrepreneurship and increase local incomes.

However, experts point out that the lack of proper infrastructure has prevented this industry from creating as much wealth as it deserves. For this region to promote tourism, the government aims to complete small and large semi-finished projects, develop agritourism, boost infrastructure, and complete recreational camps' infrastructure.

With several villages, the province has a high capacity for agritourism, which could be considered a new source of income for the villagers, the deputy provincial tourism chief said. The province is also home to several pristine rural areas, which offers a good opportunity to investors for launching eco-lodge units, Ali Bakhsh-



Karami explained. The gigantic water park of Yasuj, the capital of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad province, which has not been completed yet, is another project that could attract more tourists and generate job opportunities upon its completion, he added. However, an adequate budget needs to be allocated to complete the projects and develop tourism infrastructure, he noted. Earlier in May, deputy tourism minister Ali-Asghar Shalabafian announced that the Iranian government had allocated a budget of 60 trillion rials (\$213 million) to boost tourism infrastructure all over the country. The money will be used to complete, restore, and equip accommodation

centers, as well as strengthen tourism infrastructure nationwide, he added.

Kohgiluyeh and Boyer Ahmad province is known for its nomads and nomadic life. Sightseers may live with a nomadic or rural family for a while or enjoy an independent stay and assist them with day-to-day life. It also opens up an opportunity to feel rustic routines, their agriculture, traditions, arts, and culture.

Tepe Rivi: Archaeologists Digging Site Previously Yielded relics from Bronze age to Islamic Era

Archaeologists have commenced work on Tepe Rivi, a rich excavation site in northeast Iran, which previously yielded relics and ruins dating from the Bronze Age to the early Islamic period. Up to the moment, nine seasons of archaeology have been carried out

on the site, of which seven were conducted by joint Iranian and German experts, North Khorasan province's tourism chief said on Saturday. "Based on archaeological evidence, Ravi is one of the most important historical sites in the northeast of the country, where determined archaeological research can help improve our understanding of the historical identity of the region and develop tourism in North Khorasan," Mohammadreza Qahremanian said. Previous archaeological excavations have delivered significant results, including a large area inhabited for about 2300 years from about 1700 BC to the end of the Sassanid era, the official explained. Elsewhere in



his remarks, the official underlined the vast size and importance of the site under the Achaemenid rule. "Ravi is of high importance as its size reached more than 110 hectares during the Achaemenid period and it seems that it was one of the important cities of the Achaemenid period

(c. 550 BC to 330 CE) in the northeast of the country." Initial archaeological research on Ravi started in 2012. Since then teams of Iranian and German archaeologists accessed remains of settlements from the Bronze and Iron Ages, the Achaemenid (550-330 BC), the Parthian (247 BC-224 CE), the

Sassanid dynasty (224-651 CE), and the early Islamic period. So far, professionals in the fields of archaeology, geography, geophysics, geomorphology, and ecology from the [Ludwig Maximilian] University of Munich; the [Free] University of Berlin; the University of Tehran and Shahid Beheshti University have worked in Ravi archaeological site.