

Russian arrivals in Iran have soared some 2.2 percent this summer compared to the same period last year. Demand for summer trips to Iran and Saudi Arabia among Russians has increased by 2.2 times over the year, IRNA reported. On August 1, Tehran and Moscow officially agreed to implement a previously inked visa-free tourist exchange dedicated to groups of five to 50 travelers. In a similar agreement, Russia inaugurated another mutual visa-waiver program with China on the same day. Based on data compiled by MegaFon, as RIA Novosti reports, the United Arab Emirates, despite the daytime air temperature in Dubai, Sharjah, and Abu Dhabi at 40 degrees, was visited by 37% more Russians. The Near and Middle East interested Russians in holidays in Iran (+115%) and Saudi Arabia (+123%) in terms of the total number of tourists, the Near and Middle East bypassed the countries of Europe.

### Russian Arrivals in Iran up 2.2 Percent in Summer

## Ardabil to host intl. Conference on Sustainable Tourism

Ardabil, a historical city in northwest Iran, will host an international conference on sustainable tourism on October 12. A number of Iranian and international experts and academics from various universities will be invited to join the conference aimed to address pillars of sustainable tourism, its challenges, and solutions, the provincial tourism chief said. Co-organized by Ardabil's tourism directorate and University of Mohaghegh Ardabili, the conference is intended to discuss concerns for economic, social, and environmental issues, improving tourists' experiences and addressing the needs of host communities, Hassan Mohammadiadib said. The organizers hope to reach a new roadmap that enhances a high level of tourist satisfaction yet helps raise the awareness of local communities as columns for sustainable tourism in the province. According to the World Tourism Organization, sustainable tourism development guidelines and manage-

ment practices apply to all forms of tourism in all types of destinations, including mass tourism and the various niche tourism segments. Sustainability principles refer to the environmental, economic, and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development, and a suitable balance must be established between these three dimensions to guarantee its long-term sustainability. The UN body says sustainable tourism development requires the informed participation of all relevant stakeholders, as well as strong political leadership to ensure wide participation and consensus building. Achieving sustainable tourism is a continuous process and it requires constant monitoring of impacts, and introducing the necessary preventive and/or corrective measures whenever necessary. The 2023 ECO Tourism Capital, Ardabil is a popular destination for domestic vacationers and a lesser-known gem for many potential travelers from across the globe.



Perspective



### Historical Bazaar in Saveh undergoes Restoration

A fresh round of restoration has commenced on the centuries-old bazaar of Saveh, which comprises hundreds of shops laid out along the mazing vaulted alleys and thoroughfares.

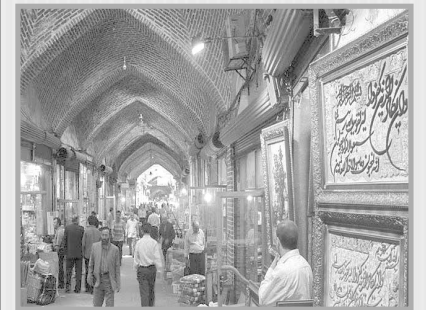
The public market dates from the Safavid era (1501-1736) and it is one of the top destinations for sightseers visiting the central Iranian city.

Moreover, the property embraces a scenic mosque and some Timches (small arcaded courtyards each dedicated to a single type of business).

Bazaars in the ancient Islamic world were vividly described in the folktales of "The Thousand and One Nights."

Bazaars are typically roofed for protection against the hot desert sun, either with a single roof, with individual vaulted cupolas or domes, or with awnings.

In Iranian culture, bazaars have made great contributions to commercial activities. Meanwhile their extended activities can be traced to social, cultural, political, and religious roles.



Most mazes and passages offer certain commodities such as carpets, metalwork, toys, clothing, jewelry, kitchen appliances, traditional spices, herbal remedies, and natural perfumes. One can also bump into colorful grocery stores, bookbinders, blacksmiths, tinsmiths, coppersmiths, tobacconists, tailors, flag sellers, broadcloth sellers, carpenters, shoemakers, and knife-makers.

In addition, there are divided carpet sections in a bazaar that enable visitors to browse hand-woven Persian carpets and rugs. From another point of view, bazaars are also synonyms for foods, with their unmissable colorful stalls of vegetables, herbs, and spices. Yet, most of these ingredients might be mysterious to a foreign eye.

Browsing through a traditional bazaar may provide new experiences and fresh points of view on ancient Iran. Such excursions can be made either in person or by "off-the-beaten-track" tours. Not only it's an opportunity to discover dozens of unique local ingredients, but it's also a chance to taste street foods and delicacies, in some traditional bakery known only by locals and shopkeepers. While roaming over a vaulted bazaar, people-watching and even mingling with them is one of the best ways to take the pulse of the ancient land

## Ancient Educational Complex, Fortress and Church under Urgent Restoration



Urgent restoration works have commenced on a number of ancient properties, including an educational complex, fortress and a church located in northwest Iran. Urgent restoration projects have commenced on the 5th-century Saint Hovhannes Church, the ancient Babak fortress and Rab'-e Rashidi, which is an educational complex dating back to the 14th century, and several other properties in East Azarbaijan province, a local official said on Tuesday. Located in Maragheh, the Saint Hovhannes Church was highly popular during the Ilkhanid era (1256-1353), when Maragheh

was one of the Iranian prosperous cities. The Armenian Catholic church was named after one of the apostles called Johannes or John, also known as Hovhannes in the Armenian language.

Rab'-e Rashidi includes several archaeological layers that date from Ilkhanid, Safavid, and Qajar eras. Experts believe that students from Iran, China, Egypt, and Syria studied there under the supervision of physicians, intellectuals, scientists, and Islamic scholars. The educational complex was established during the reign of Ghazan, a ruler of the Ilkhanid dynasty. It embraces a paper factory,

a library, a hospital (Dar-al-Shafa), a Quranic center (Dar-al-Quran), residential facilities for teachers, students' quarters, and a caravan-serai amongst other facilities.

Babak Fortress, also known as the Immortal Castle or Republic Castle, is a large citadel on the top of a mountain in the Arasbaran forests, which is located 16 km southwest of Kalibar City in northwestern Iran. The fortress was built during the Sasanid dynastic era; however, it is famous for the 23 years' residence (816 to 837 CE) against the Arab invaders by Persian hero Babak -e- Khoramdin and his warriors.

## Khuzestan Arranges Special tour Dedicated to the Visually Impaired

Khuzestan province, which is home to three World Heritage sites, is to organize a special tour for people with visual impairments. The tourism department of Khuzestan province is organizing a tour for a host of visually impaired people, a local official said.

Necessary facilities and specialized equipment will be provided for the participants during the three-day event to be held from November 15 to 17, the official said.

Shushtar Historical Hydraulic System, Haft-Tapp-

eh, and the ziggurat of Tchoghha Zanbil are among the destinations embedded in the tour's schedule, the official said. A prehistorical masterpiece of civil engineering, the hydraulic system comprises bridges, weirs, tunnels, canals, and a series of ancient watermills powered by human-made waterfalls. The UNESCO-designated Shushtar Historical Hydraulic System testifies to the heritage and the synthesis of earlier Elamite and Mesopotamian know-how; it was probably influ-

enced by the Petra dam and tunnel and by Roman civil engineering. UNESCO says that the Shushtar Historical Hydraulic System demonstrates outstanding universal value as in its present form, it dates from the 3rd century CE, probably on older bases from the 5th century BC. It is complete, with numerous functions and large-scale, making it exceptional. Haft-Tappeh (literary meaning "Seven Mounds") is located 15 kilometers to the south of the ancient

city of Susa, itself a highly significant archaeological site in southwest Iran. Early excavations in Haft-Tappeh conducted by the late Iranian archaeologist Dr. Ezzatollah Negahban yielded numerous petroglyphs bearing cuneiform inscriptions in Akkadian, belonging to Elamite kings. The petroglyphs contain information on the religious beliefs, trading methods, and the political, cultural, and social relations of the time.

Situated at the head of the Persian Gulf and bordering



Iraq on the west, Khuzestan was settled about 6000 BC by a people with affinities to the Sumerians, who came from the Zagros

Mountains region. Urban centers appeared there contemporaneous with the first cities in Mesopotamia in the 4th millennium.

## Relief of Bearded Man, Recovered from the UK, Passes Microscopic Tests

The authenticity of a recently recovered bas-relief has been confirmed after it passed a series of special microscopic tests in a Tehran laboratory.

"A series of microscopic tests has confirmed that the stone piece bearing rock-carved relief (of a bearded man) dates back to the Sassanid era (224-651)," CHTN quoted an Iranian cultural heritage expert as saying.

"After some cast doubt on the authenticity of the relic, we were asked to find answers to two questions; First of all, discovering if the relief is a combination of resin and crushed stone cast in a mold and is fake, and secondly, after seeing photos of the relief at an airport in London, which showed the stone in several pieces, had raised doubts about the authenticity of the upper and lower parts of the bas-relief," Maliheh Mehdiabadi explained.

"We did some experiments to find the answer to these two questions; XRF and XRD analysis were carried out to identify the type of rock and its constituent minerals," the expert said.

In addition, stone samples were taken from the top and bottom behind the stone to prepare microscopic thin

sections to see if the structure of both parts of the stone is the same.

"We examined the samples with special geological microscopes and it was proved that the geological structure of both parts of the rock is the same."

Furthermore, Mehdiabadi noted it is not yet clear whether this relief was located in a closed or open space (over the past centuries).

From an archeology perspective and based on current studies, although there are still ambiguities and questions, it is confirmed that this relief belongs to the Sassanid period, she explained. Some experts believe the over-one-meter-tall antique was hacked out of live rock or on-site carved rock. It depicts an imposing male figure

carved in the 3rd century CE and is estimated to be worth £30 million. Iran's history places a great deal of significance on the Sassanid era, which saw a general renaissance in Persian art and architecture. In 2018, a collection of Sassanid historical cities in southern Iran, known as the "Sassanid Archaeological Landscape of Fars Region," was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list.



## Keeyow Lake, A Natural Marvel in Khorramabad, Western Iran

Keeyow Lake is a natural lake in the northwest of the city of Khorramabad in Iran's Lorestan Province. The lake covers an area of 7 hectares and it is 3 to 7 meters deep. There are an amusement park and other recreational facilities next to Keeyow Lake. This is the only natural lake inside Iran and is a habitat of native and migrant birds and aquatic animals. The lake is not a mere tourist attraction: it is deeply associated with the history and culture of Khorramabad. The lake's bond to this land is comparable to that of Karoon's with Ahwaz or Zayandeh Rood's with Isfahan. Keeyow means indigo, clear and deep water in Lori, a local dialect of the Persian language. It is particularly important as it creates a good promenade for Khorramabad residents and tourists. The water of Keeyow Lake originates from the springs in Makhmal Kooch, a nearby mountain.

