



Iran's oldest known handicrafts have been traced to its Lorestan province, according to a local official. Abbas Hamzeh'i, deputy head of handicrafts in Lorestan, said archaeological findings show that some of the earliest handicrafts identified in the country originated in the region. "Lorestan is very distinguished in the field of handicrafts, and the oldest crafts known to archaeologists and experts belong to this land," Hamzeh'i said. The official said one of the earliest examples is a deer fang pendant discovered in Yafteh Cave near Khorramabad, which dates back about 40,000 years and was used as a personal ornamentation. He added that Lorestan is also renowned for its ancient bronze and metal works, many of which date to the early first millennium BC and are preserved in museums.

**Oldest handicrafts'  
Traced to Lorestan,  
Local Official Says**

# Archaeological Survey Launched to Protect Surt in Northern Iran

A team of archaeologists has begun a survey to determine the boundaries and propose a protective buffer zone for the ancient site of Surt in Mazandaran province, northern Iran, officials said on Monday. The project will be supported by the provincial department for cultural heritage, and it has been authorized by Iran's Research Institute of Cultural Heritage and Tourism, CHTN reported. The excavation team is led by Saman Sourtijji, assistant professor and faculty member at the Research Institute of Cultural Heritage and Tourism, with the participation of local archaeologists, the Islamic Council, and the village administration of Orost, and the management of the Surt natural springs (better known as Badab-e Surt by the locals) tourism complex. Preliminary studies show that the site lies along a major historical route linking the ancient settlement of Qusheh ("City of a Hundred Gates") to the Gorgan plain, containing evidence of successive settlements, Sourtijji said. Surt is known for its travertine stepped

springs with red, cream, and yellow hues, which were inscribed on Iran's national natural heritage list as the country's second registered natural site. Surface finds

(15th–16th centuries CE). According to Sourtijji, the site covers more than 300 hectares and includes ancient settlement areas and cemeteries. It is



now indicate that the area was also a significant settlement from the Chalcolithic and Bronze Age through the Iron Age, continuing into the 9th and 10th centuries AH

bordered by Mount Surt in the north, the colorful travertine springs in the south, and rangelands and foothills to the east and west.

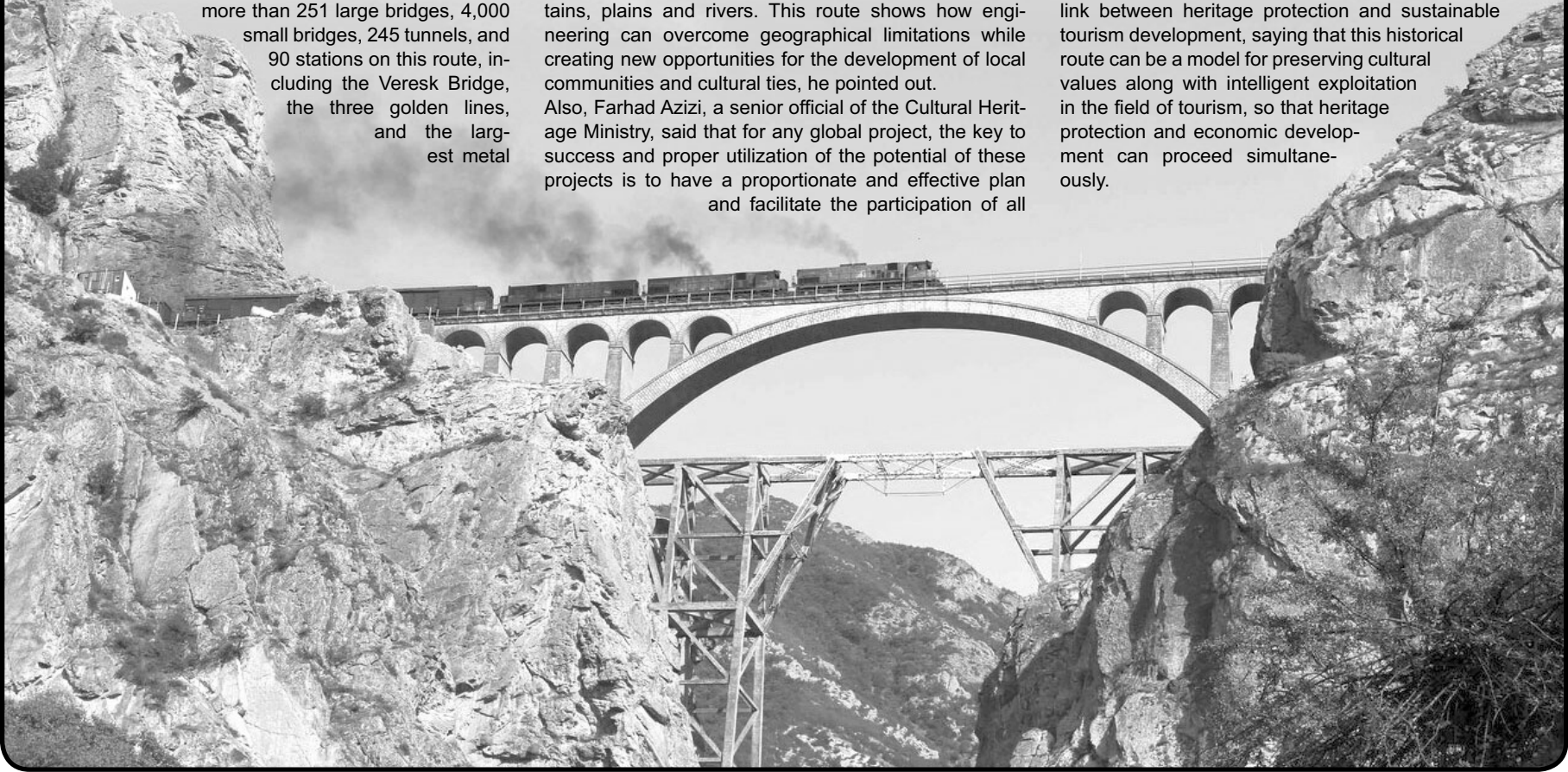
He said the natural features of Surt also make it unique. The springs include a large saline pool of about 500 square meters, smaller slightly acidic and carbonated springs, and another toxic to livestock, alongside an upstream freshwater spring that sustained ancient habitation. Elsewhere in his remarks, the archaeologist warned that the site faces serious threats from illegal excavations, road construction, and tourism-related development. Implementing this probing program to define the site's boundaries and propose a legal buffer zone is a necessary step for sustainable protection of this cultural and natural heritage, he said. The findings will also help clarify the historical significance of the area, paving the way for broader excavations, improved management, and stronger preservation efforts, the archaeologist added. Sourtijji also called for stronger institutional support to safeguard Surt as a "treasure of Iran's history and nature" and to prepare it for potential nomination to the UNESCO World Heritage list.

# Trans-Iranian Railway among Top 5 Registered by UNESCO

Only five railways are on the UNESCO list, which are from Austria, India, Switzerland, Italy, and Iran, said Vahidali Qardashi, head of the World Heritage Site of the Trans-Iranian Railway. Speaking at the special gathering attended by Deputy Cultural Heritage Minister Ali Darabi, a senior official of the Cultural Heritage Ministry Farhad Azizi and managers and assistants of cultural heritage departments of eight provinces connected to the national railway on Tuesday, he said that Trans-Iranian Railway was the first North-South Corridor in the region that connected Caspian Sea to the Persian Gulf, IRNA reported. During the gathering, the technical, cultural and tourism capacities of the 1394-kilometer-long railway was studied. This route, passing through eight sub-climates and four major climates, has created an unparalleled masterpiece of engineering, architecture, art, and cultural interaction. The construction of more than 251 large bridges, 4,000 small bridges, 245 tunnels, and 90 stations on this route, including the Veresk Bridge, the three golden lines, and the largest metal

bridge over the Karun River in Ahvaz, is a manifestation of Iranian engineering power in the 20th century. The total length of the tunnels on this route reaches 83 kilometers, including the Gaduk and Chahar Abdiz tunnels; works that were considered technical and architectural masterpieces of the world in their time. Qardashi said that it is the first railway registered from West Asia. The engineering masterpiece is a symbol of Iranian management during the history. "One of the unique features of Iran's railway is that it passes through four different climates. passengers on a rail trip can experience significant differences in temperature and climate, a blessing that few countries in the world enjoy." He emphasized that this railway is not only a transportation route, but also a unique example of an engineering system that has created remarkable transformations in natural and human environments by crossing mountains, plains and rivers. This route shows how engineering can overcome geographical limitations while creating new opportunities for the development of local communities and cultural ties, he pointed out. Also, Farhad Azizi, a senior official of the Cultural Heritage Ministry, said that for any global project, the key to success and proper utilization of the potential of these projects is to have a proportionate and effective plan and facilitate the participation of all

stakeholders, especially local people and communities. "Today, we have a unique capacity and a reputable and global brand. We must hold these meetings in form of practical and interactive workshops and provide the necessary platforms for introducing the outstanding global values of the works. The program of the National and World Heritage Sites is not limited to introducing the works, but is designed with the aim of laying the groundwork for the maximum role of all institutions, sympathizers and investors so that comprehensive participation leads to strengthening the infrastructure and sustainable exploitation of this world heritage and Iran's railways become a powerful tourism and economic axis." Meanwhile, Deputy Cultural Heritage Minister Ali Darabi said many Iranian families have played a role in the railway, and this social capital is the main support for the global registration of this great work. He also pointed out the importance of the railway in the link between heritage protection and sustainable tourism development, saying that this historical route can be a model for preserving cultural values along with intelligent exploitation in the field of tourism, so that heritage protection and economic development can proceed simultaneously.



# Karaftoo cave, Countryside Destinations for Traveling in summer

Summer always invites you to a short but profound journey into the hidden beauties of Iran. This land, with its lesser-seen treasures, from ancient caves that hold the secrets of history to desert valleys and cool countryside destinations that bring peace to the soul, is home to destinations that each have a unique story, Khabar Online wrote. Karaftoo cave, located 70 kilometers from

Divan-Darreh city in Kordestan province, is one of the most amazing caves of the country with its natural halls and ancient carvings. If you drive from Divan-Darreh to Karaftoo cave road, you will reach there in an hour. The cool weather of the cave creates an ideal atmosphere for guided tours, photography of limestone columns and historical inscriptions, and discovery of its ancient history.

Entrance fees, parking and small cafes are available on the site, and Divan-Darreh restaurants serve local dishes such as Khalal stew and Dokhineh. On the cave paths, do not deviate from the marked paths and wear suitable shoes to avoid slipping. Karaftoo, with its underground secrets, invites you to a different adventure in the heart of Kordestan's history.



## Perspective



### Shiraz Emerges as Key Health Tourism Hub

Shiraz, one of Iran's main cultural and tourism destinations, has become a leading center for regional medical tourism, local and national officials said. The city offers advanced healthcare facilities, specialist medical teams, and integrated medical tourism services that attract visitors from neighboring countries as well as across Iran, according to Mohsen Ziaei, who serves as the tourism chief of Fars province.



Authorities have launched a centralized health tourism system in Shiraz, the provincial capital, to provide international patients with access to licensed hospitals, travel service offices, and professional tour guides. The platform also allows patients to file complaints about medical or travel services, which will be handled through a legal oversight mechanism, Ziaei said. "This system will play a vital role in ensuring transparency and efficiency in the medical tourism industry," Ziaei told reporters, adding that strict monitoring would help guarantee high standards of care. Oman has shown interest in expanding cooperation with Shiraz in health tourism, with Omani officials emphasizing the importance of building closer bilateral ties to encourage patients to seek treatment in the Iranian city. The move reflects growing recognition of Shiraz's medical capabilities among regional countries. The expansion in Shiraz aligns with Iran's broader strategy to boost health tourism nationwide. Deputy Tourism Minister Anoushirvan Mohseni Bandpei said the government has launched an integrated health tourism system in Tehran, Khorasan Razavi, and Fars provinces, with plans to expand to the rest of the country. The national system is being developed in coordination with the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Tourism, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, accredited hospitals with International Patient Departments, licensed travel agencies, and medical professionals. Officials say it is designed to streamline services, improve transparency, and manage the entire process of medical travel. Authorities say its progress could serve as a model for other Iranian regions seeking to expand their role in the Middle East's growing health tourism sector. Last September, Mohammad-Reza Vaez-Mahdavi, Chairman of Iran's Scientific Association of Health Economy, announced that the Islamic Republic has the potential to generate €6 billion annually from medical tourism with proper planning. He also highlighted visions to become a healthcare hub for West Asia in the coming years, which includes plans to export €1 billion worth of vaccines and medical equipment annually. Neighboring countries, such as Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Oman, Bahrain, Armenia, and Tajikistan constitute Iran's main source of medical tourism.