

# Iranian hotels ready to welcome foreign tourists

## Ancient "city of the mouthless" protected, renovated



TEHRAN - Shahr-e Yeri, a unique archaeological site in northwest Iran, has been protected and renovated through a variety of measures taken during the first half of the current Iranian calendar year 1400 (started March 21).

Situated near Pirazman village of Meshkin Shahr, in Ardebil province, the ancient city, sometimes referred to as the "city of the mouthless", is one of the earliest inhabitants in the country.

Some of these measures include the acquisition and delivery of polycarbonate sheets of light panels, paving the access road to the site, construction of walls, landscaping, and establishing a sanitary complex, the provincial tourism chief has announced.

An important part of the stone facade of the prayer hall and the sanitary complex was completed during the mentioned time, and site introduction signs and route guides were also installed, CHTN quoted Nader Fallahi as saying on Monday.

Repairing the telephone network and installing an internet connection as well as giving a per-

mit to dig wells to solve the site's drinking water problem was among the actions taken to boost the site's infrastructures, the official added.

With thousands of years of history and immense importance, efforts are being made to organize and introduce this ancient site at the national and international levels, he noted.

The 400-hectare archaeological site of Shahr-e Yeri was inscribed on the list of national heritage sites in 1931.

The site embraces an Iron-Age fortress, three prehistorical temples, and tens of stones on which bizarre-shaped mouthless faces have been carved. During its heyday bodies of the dead were buried with special ceremonies and rituals in compliance with religious beliefs, however, the majority of the tombs were found empty of skeletons due to illegal excavations, according to the Circle of Ancient Iranian Studies.

More than 10,000 ancient petroglyphs and rock-carved arts have been discovered in and near Meshkin Shahr over the past couple of years. Some of the objects bear depictions of human beings in archery, cavalry in rhythmic and magical themes. There are also petroglyphs depicting mountain goats, boat anchors, shooting and scenes of war, and scenes of deer hunting in individual and collective forms.

Rock arts can be seen around mountainous regions across Iran where roaming life and livestock farming are prevalent typically. The rock-carved figures of animals and associated tools are regarded as good clues to help shed light on daily life in the distant past, though some figures might be symbolic.

## Historical cistern in Yazd restored to former glory

TEHRAN - A restoration project has been commenced on a Qajar-era (1789-1925) Ab-Anbar (cistern) in the city of Bafq, the central province of Yazd, Bafq's tourism chief has said.

The project involved strengthening the structure using cob material, repairing its fences, and replacing worn-out materials, Leili Ranjbar said on Monday.

The historical monument is one of the biggest cisterns in the region, which is located in the historical texture of the city, she noted.

The term Ab-Anbar is common throughout Iran as a designation for roofed underground water cisterns. It associates with water management systems in arid areas that are reliant on permanent springs or on seasonal rainwater.

Such underground reservoirs or Ab-Anbars are parts of the iconic qanat systems, which rely on snow-fed streams flowing down from surrounding mountains.

Qanats, according to UNESCO, provide exceptional testimony to cultural traditions and civilizations in desert areas with an arid climate.

In July 2017, the historical structure of the city of Yazd was named a UNESCO World Heritage. Wedged between the northern Dasht-e Kavir and the southern Dasht-e Lut on a flat plain, the oasis city enjoys a very harmonious public-religious architecture that dates from different eras.

Yazd is usually referred to as a delightful place to stay, or a "don't miss" destination by almost all of its visitors. The city is full of mudbrick houses that are equipped with



innovative badgirs (wind catchers), atmospheric alleyways, and many Islamic and Iranian monuments that shape its eye-catching city landscape.

It is a living testimony to the intelligent use of limited available resources in the desert for survival. Water is brought to the city by the qanat system. Each district of the city is built on a qanat and has a communal center.

The use of earth in buildings includes walls and roofs by the construction of vaults and domes. Houses are built with courtyards below ground level, serving underground areas. Wind-catchers, courtyards, and thick earthen walls create a pleasant microclimate.

Partially covered alleyways together with streets, public squares and courtyards contribute to a pleasant urban quality. The city escaped the modernization trends that destroyed many traditional earthen cities.

It survives today with its traditional districts, the qanat system, traditional houses, bazaars, hammams, water cisterns, mosques, synagogues, Zoroastrian temples, and the historic garden of Dolat-Abad. The city enjoys the peaceful coexistence of three religions: Islam, Judaism, and Zoroastrianism.

From page 1 - Iraqi tourists will flood the country once the borders open, but attracting tourists from Europe will require some time, he noted.

Foreign advertising in foreign media and press, on the internet and through well-known international bloggers should also be planned and taken seriously, he mentioned.

Earlier this month, the official noted that Iranian hotels have lost 202 trillion rials (some \$4.8 billion at the official exchange rate of 42,000 rials per dollar) of potential revenues due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Two-thirds of the hotel staff have lost their jobs as well, he added.

Back in September, Hamzehzadeh announced that all employees of accommodation centers across Iran are scheduled to be vaccinated against the coronavirus.

"To vaccinate staffs of all accommodation centers, including eco-lodges, apartment hotels, and guest houses, as well as hotels, more coordination with the Ministry of Health is needed," he added.

Back in July, ISNA reported that the tourism industry of the country has suffered a loss of some 320 trillion rials (\$7.6 billion at the official exchange rate of 42,000 rials per dollar) since the outbreak of the



coronavirus pandemic.

The pandemic has also ruined more than 44,000 jobs in a once budding travel sector of the country, the report added.

Experts believe accommodation centers suffered the most as a result of the outbreak of the coronavirus in Iran and its subsequent unemployment and financial losses.

Iran plans to resume issuing tourist visas

Back in September, Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Minister Ezzatollah Zarghami announced that by the order of President Ebrahim Raisi the issuance of tourist visas and the flow of foreign tourists from land and air borders will be resumed from the month of Aban (Oct. 23 - Nov. 21) following 19 months of suspension.

Some experts believe Iran is still somehow "unknown" for many potential travelers due to Western "media war". Several estimates have been released so far on the extent of the tourism-related losses incurred by the pandemic. Only months into the outbreak, Zarghami's predecessor, Ali Asghar Mounesan, lamented that the number of foreign travelers to Iran was drastically plunged due to the pandemic.

"Tourism of the country was growing before the corona [outbreak], its revenues reached \$117 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," Mounesan said. He added 8.7 million foreign nationals visited Iran during the [Iranian] year (1398), adding that Iran was ranked as the second fastest-growing country in tourism based on data compiled by the World Tourism Organization.

They now have good grounds of hope as Zarghami announced on September 19 that the country plans to lift visa restrictions to help the severely hit tourism industry.

Meanwhile, the number of people testing positive for COVID-19 has continued to fall in the Islamic Republic, curbing a stubborn fifth wave of the pandemic, which has seen daily mortalities of up to 700 in recent weeks. As of September 22, the figure dropped to below 300 as the government has devoted a great deal of effort to vaccinate citizens against the nasty virus.

Iran is potentially a booming destination for travelers seeking cultural attractions, breathtaking sceneries, and numerous UNESCO-registered sites. Under the 2025 Tourism Vision Plan, Iran aims to increase the number of tourist arrivals from 4.8 million in 2014 to 20 million in 2025.

## Qajar-era bathhouse to turn into creative center for handicrafts

TEHRAN - Harmam-e Haj Shuhab Khan, a Qajar-era (1789-1925) public bathhouse in the western province of Kermanshah is planned to be repurposed into a creative center for handicrafts, the provincial tourism chief has said.

The historical structure will be ceded to the private sector to turn into a creative center for handicrafts with the aim of sharing knowledge, promoting, preserving, and exporting local hand-made products, as well as providing sustainable employment in this sector, Jabbar Gohari said on Monday, IRNA reported.

After resolving the legal problems and property issues of the historical monument, the facility could be effectively used as a handicrafts center, the official added.

The project is planned to be carried out in collaboration with the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) related to the handicrafts sector, he noted.

Some historical sites and monuments across Iran have been temporarily ceded to the private sector during the past couple of years under the close supervision of the Fund, to achieve higher productivity and better maintenance.

The lack of a sufficient government budget for the restoration of all centuries-old sites is the main reason behind the ceding projects.

In 2019, the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts announced that of the numerous historical buildings and structures that are scattered across Iran, some 2,500 ones need

restoration.

Public bathhouses in Persian culture

The bathhouse, which was mostly built with red bricks, was inscribed on the National Heritage list in 2003.

Bathhouses or "hammams" in Iran were not only places for bathing and cleaning up. They had a social concept for people who gathered at these places weekly.

It was a place where people talked with each other about their daily life and shared humor and news. There are still bathhouses in Iranian cities but they do not have their social function anymore since most people have bathtubs in their homes due to the modern lifestyle.

Some cities had separate bathhouses for men and women. They were usually built next to each other. However, there were some bathhouses, which were used by men and women at different times of the day.

There were also male and female public bathhouses; at daybreak, a longhorn (boooq-e javaz) was blown to announce that the bath was ready. Men came to the baths from daybreak till the afternoon. Women could then use the bathhouses till sunset. In some cases, five days were allocated to men and two days to women.

Persian literature is full of proverbs, narrations, and folk stories about bathhouses, which indicate the importance of the place in the past time.

Wide-ranging handicrafts

With 14 entries, Iran ranks first globally for the number of cities and villages registered by the World Crafts Council, as China with seven entries, Chile with four, and India with three ones come next.

In January 2020, the cities of Shiraz, Malayer, and Zanjan and the village of Qassemabad were designated by the WCC - Asia Pacific Region, putting Iran's number of world crafts cities and villages from ten to 14.

The value of Iran's handicrafts exports stood at \$120 million during the first eleven months of the past Iranian calendar year 1399 (March 20, 2020 - February 18, 2021), Mehr reported. The country's handicrafts exports surpassed during the mentioned months in comparison to the same period last year earlier due to the damage the coronavirus pandemic has inflicted on global trade.

The Islamic Republic exported \$427 million worth of handicrafts during the first eleven months of the calendar year 1399. Of the figure, some \$190 million was earned via suitcase trade (allowed for customs-free and tax-free transfer) through 20 provinces, according to data compiled by the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts.

Ceramics, pottery vessels, handwoven cloths as well as personal ornaments with precious and semi-precious gemstones are traditionally exported to Iraq, Afghanistan, Germany, the U.S., the UK, and other countries.

## Flooring project begins at historic bazaar of Tabriz

TEHRAN - A flooring project is underway at Amir Shomal covered passage of the UNESCO-registered bazaar of Tabriz, northwestern East Azarbaijan province.

To preserve, reinforce and reorganize the covered passages of the historical bazaar, the project is being carried out in collaboration with the shop owners, Hossein Esmaeli, the director of the World Heritage Site, said on Sunday.

The project is scheduled to be completed within a month, the official added.

Tabriz Historic Bazaar Complex has been a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 2010 and was mentioned by Marco Polo when he traveled the Silk Road in the Middle Ages.

A jumble of interconnected covered passages that stretches for about five kilometers, the bazaar has been a melting pot of cultural exchange since antiquity.

It embraces countless shops, over 20 caravanserais, and inns, some 20 vast domed halls, bathhouses

and mosques, as well as other brick structures and enclosed spaces for different functions. Its history dates back to over a millennium, however, the majority of fine brick vaults that capture most visitors' eyes date from the 15th century.

Tabriz became the capital of the Mongol Il-Khan Mahmud Gazan (1295-1304) and his successor, Timur (Tamerlane), a Turkic conqueror, took it in 1392. Some decades later the Kara Koyunlu Turkmen made it their capital, it was when the famous Blue Mosque was built in Tabriz.

The ancient city retained its administrative status under the Safavid dynasty until 1548 when Shah Tahmasp I relocated his capital westward to Qazvin.

During the next two centuries, Tabriz changed hands several times between Persia and the Ottoman Empire. During World War I, the city was temporarily occupied by Turkish and then Soviet troops.



Bazaars in Persian towns

Bazaar is, originally, a public market district of a Persian town. The bazaar of the ancient Islamic world was vividly described in the folktales of "The Thousand and One Nights". Located in a distinct quarter of a town, it was bustling and noisy by day in contrast to the quiet residential quarters. Access was forbidden after sundown.

Distinctive architecture characterized some bazaars—such as those built at Kashan and Isfahan in Iran in the 17th century. They were usually roofed for protection against the hot desert sun, either with a

single roof, with individual vaulted cupolas or domes, or with awnings.

From another point of view, bazaars are also synonyms of foods, with their unmissable colorful stalls of vegetables, herbs, and spices. Yet, most of these ingredients might be mysterious to a foreign eye. Teahouses help punctuate the walk and a traditional restaurant is a perfect place for lunch.

Browsing through a traditional bazaar may provide new experiences and fresh points of view on the ancient land. 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 shoppers.

People watching and even mingling with them in the bazaars is one of the best ways to take the pulse of the country. Bazaars have traditionally been major economic and social centers in any Iranian city.

### Invitation to participate in the tender "second announcement"

Bistoon Tamin paper manufacturing company to perform reviewing and completion of basic design engineering, detail design and purchasing engineering, site supervision, pre-commissioning, test and commissioning of the project of construction of Bistoon Tamin packaging paper factory located in Iran, Kermanshah province, Harsin city intends to purchase consulting services through tender among the consulting engineering companies with qualified and free capacity with the sufficient expertise and experience in the field of designing the paper industries. Eligible companies can apply to the RONIN CO. (address: No.9, Afshar Street, Khoddami avenue, Vanak square Tehran, Iran (Tel.:+9821 88052006) from the second announcement October 19, 2021 to Wednesday October 27, 2021 to receive the bidding documents.

The employer is free to reject or accept the bids of the bidders.