



Signaling a significant push for tourism growth, more than 600 investment packages have been introduced by Iran's Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Ministry. An official in charge of tourism investments, revealed a comprehensive initiative aimed at bolstering the tourism sector through strategic investment collaborations. Ahmad Tajari highlighted the joint efforts between governmental entities and the private sector, resulting in the development of 636 investment packages meticulously crafted to showcase the country's tourism potential and attract both domestic and international investors. Furthermore, Tajari highlighted the specific focus areas of these investment packages, with 125 packages dedicated to tourism ventures related to water resources, water therapy, and water-based recreational activities.

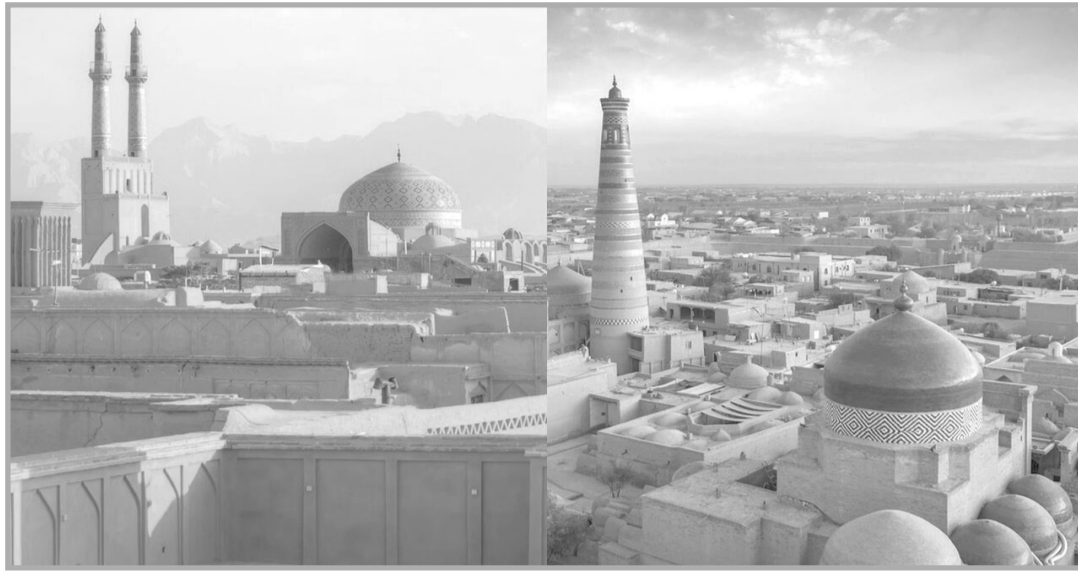
**Iran's Tourism Gets Boost with Hundreds of Investment Packages**

## From Yazd to Khiva: Twin Gems of Ancient Architecture and Culture

In the vast expanse of Asia, among the myriad of ancient cities, two stand out for their striking similarities and rich cultural heritage: Yazd in Iran and Khiva in Uzbekistan. Though separated by miles of desert and mountains, Yazd and Khiva each offer their own unique glimpses into the past, with architectural wonders that tell stories of resilience, faith, and artistry. Whether it's the ingenious wind-catchers of Yazd or the stunning minarets of Khiva, these cities captivate the imagination and offer a deep connection to the distant past. Reading travelogues, we see that many sightseers have said visiting these cities is like stepping into a different era, where the echoes of history resonate through every alley and courtyard.

### A view of Khiva

For instance, the Jameh Mosque of Yazd, with its towering minarets and intricate tilework, stands as a testament to the city's Islamic heritage. The Zoroastrian Fire Temple, with a flame said to have been burning for over a thousand years, highlights the city's diverse religious history. And in Khiva, the Djuma Mosque, with its forest of 212 wooden columns, offers a unique architectural experience. Here, madrasahs, such as those of Alla-Kulli-Khan and Muhammad Aminkhon, not only served



as educational centers but also as hubs of social activity, reflecting the city's role as a center of learning and culture.

### A view of Yazd

When it comes to cultural festivals and traditions, both are vibrant with cultural practices and festivals. Yazd is renowned for its Nowruz (Persian New Year) celebrations and the unique Muharram rituals of Ashura, which attract visitors from around the world. These events offer a deep insight into the spiritual and social fabric of Iranian culture. Khiva, on the other hand, hosts the annual Khorezm Dance Festival, celebrating traditional Uzbek dance and music. This festival brings the city's streets to life with color and rhythm, offering visitors an immersive cultural experience.

**A formal connection**  
In February 2021, these two ancient cities were officially twinned through an online Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed by the mayors of Yazd and Khiva. This agreement underscored their cultural and historical connections and laid the groundwork for collaboration in cultural preservation and tourism development.

**UNESCO labels**  
The historical cores of Yazd and

Khiva (Itchan Kala, which is the inner fortress of Khiva), have been recognized by UNESCO as World Heritage sites. This recognition is due to their well-preserved mosques, historic schools (madrasahs), caravanserais, rising minarets, and traditional houses.

### Suggestions for enhanced partnership

Yazd and Khiva have the potential to create a powerful partnership that enhances cultural exchange and boosts tourism. Here are some proposals to enrich links between the two: cultural exchange programs, joint tourism packages, combined cultural

festivals, collaborative digital platforms such as virtual tours and digital archives, joint social media campaigns, educational and research collaborations, enhanced transportation links, and joint restoration projects. And more significantly, producing films, documentaries, or series about Yazd and Khiva can significantly raise public awareness about their cultural, touristic, and historical significance. In fact, films and documentaries vigorously help bring the unique cultural heritage of Yazd and Khiva to life through compelling visuals and storytelling. By highlighting the intricate details of their architecture, traditions, and daily life, audiences can gain a deeper appreciation of these cities' rich histories. For example, a documentary featuring the wind-catchers of Yazd and the minarets of Khiva can visually demonstrate the ingenuity and aesthetic beauty of these architectural marvels. In addition, travel documentaries and feature films can inspire viewers to visit Yazd and Khiva by showcasing their stunning landscapes, historical sites, and vibrant cultures. All and all, creating a robust partnership between Yazd and Khiva helps promote sustainable tourism and ensures the preservation of their invaluable heritage for future generations.

## New Restoration Phase Breathes Life into Rayen Citadel

Kerman's Rayen citadel, one of the largest mud-brick structures in the world has entered a new phase of restoration. Vahid Taheri, a local official in charge of Rayen citadel's restoration, regarding the start of this new phase, stated that the restoration project has begun with a budget exceeding 10 billion rials (approximately \$20,000).

"The new phase of the restoration," he added. "Includes work on the walls, facades, and roof of the cita-

del's school." Taheri further noted that many tourists visit this historical site throughout the year, and each year various parts of this valuable structure are restored, renovated, and organized by the provincial cultural heritage headquarters. In his concluding remarks, Taheri highlighted that the Rayen citadel is one of the most significant historical attractions of Kerman, covering an area of over 22,000 square meters.

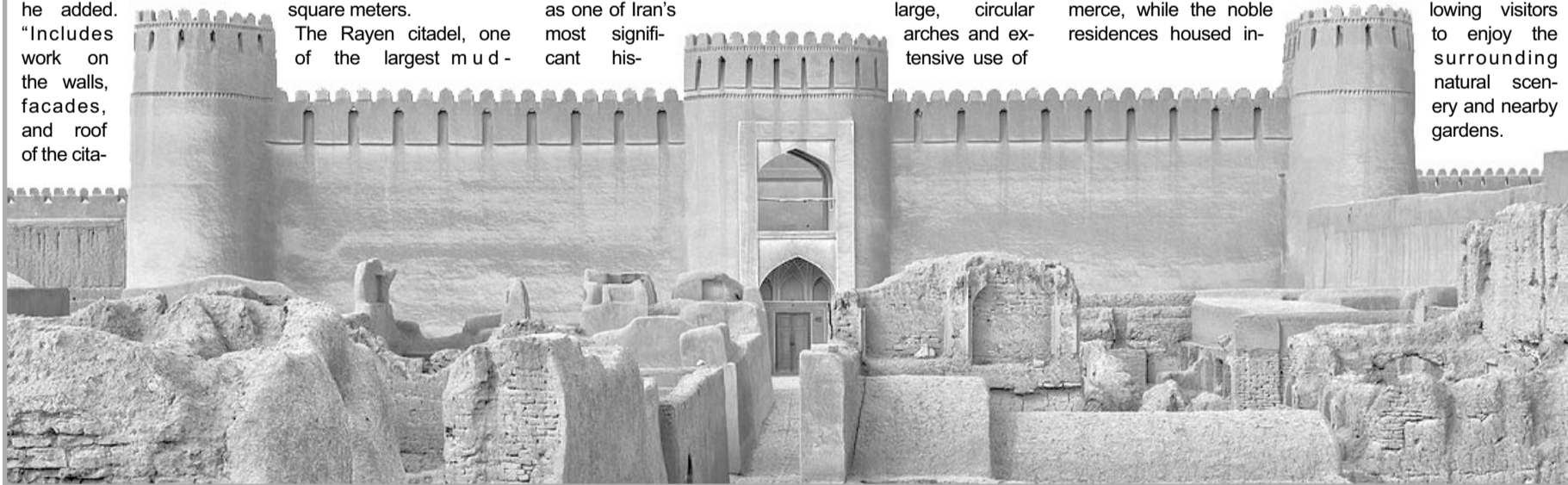
The Rayen citadel, one of the largest mud-

brick structures in the world and the second-largest in Iran after the Bam citadel, stands approximately 30 kilometers from the city of Kerman. Historical records indicate that its origins date back to the first century AH. Discoveries within the citadel, including various inscriptions and historical artifacts, have enabled Iranian archaeologists to confirm that the Rayen citadel predates Islam and stands as one of Iran's most significant his-

torical monuments. The architecture, reflecting Sassanid design, supports this assertion. Perched atop a hill, the citadel features multiple towers and a grand entrance gate leading visitors directly into its courtyard. The structure's walls are entirely made of mud bricks, with the shortest standing at 10 meters. The intricate design and geometric patterns are characteristic of Sassanid architecture, featuring large, circular arches and extensive use of

mud bricks. Inside, the citadel is divided into various sections, reflecting a vibrant community once thriving within its walls. These include a bazaar where traders sold goods, noble residences for governmental and elite figures, storage facilities for year-round food supplies, and fire temples, which have been frequently mentioned in historical texts. The market area was a bustling hub of commerce, while the noble residences housed in-

fluent figures of the time. The fire temples, central to the Sassanid era, provide further evidence of the citadel's ancient origins. The residential areas also reveal a clear distinction between the elite and the common populace. Kerman, known for its cold climate, makes the spring and summer the ideal seasons to visit the Rayen Citadel. During these months, the weather is pleasant, allowing visitors to enjoy the surrounding natural scenery and nearby gardens.



## Ilam's Charm draws Hundreds of Overseas Tourists in Two Months

In the very first two months of current Persian year (started at March 19), Ilam province has seen a substantial rise in the number of inbound tourists.

Farzad Sharifi, a local official in charge of tourism, on Wednesday, announced that 1,682 foreign tourists from various countries stayed overnight in Ilam's accommodation and tourism centers during the first two months of the current year. "This marks a notable increase compared to the previous year," he added. Sharifi detailed that these tourists utilized various accommodation facilities, including hotels, guest houses, homestays, and resorts. The peak periods for tourist stays, he underscored, are during Nowruz (the Iranian New Year holidays) and the summer holidays.

Sharifi highlighted that the international visitors came from countries such as Germany, Iraq, and Afghanistan, showing a diverse range of interests in Ilam as a travel destination. He also noted a growing trend in the construction of accommodation units and tourism complexes aimed at enhancing visitor retention, thereby promoting economic development and job creation in the tourism sector. Improving the quality of services to

extend the duration of tourist stays has become a major focus for the local administration, according to the official. On a final note, Sharifi pointed out that Ilam's

diverse climate, beautiful traditional clothing, recreational and historical attractions, rich culture of hospitality, various customs, and lifestyles across different climates all contribute to the increasing number of tourists visiting the province. Nestled in western Iran, Ilam province boasts a rich tapestry of natural beauty, historical significance, and cultural heritage, making it an increasingly attractive destination for tourists. The region's diverse climate ranges from lush green landscapes to mountainous terrains,



offering a variety of experiences for nature enthusiasts. One of the key attractions in Ilam is its pristine natural scenery. The province is home to several parks and

protected areas, where visitors can enjoy hiking, wildlife spotting, and picnicking. The stunning Abdanan waterfall and the serene Seymareh dam further add to the natural allure, providing picturesque spots for relaxation and adventure. Ilam's historical and cultural heritage is equally compelling. The province features numerous ancient sites and monuments, such as the historical city of Darreh Shah, which dates back to the Elamite and Sassanid periods, offering a glimpse into Iran's rich past and the

civilizations that once flourished in the region. The cultural richness of Ilam is reflected in its vibrant traditions and customs. The local population, known for their warm hospitality, often wear colorful traditional clothing, particularly during festivals and special occasions. The province's folklore and music are integral parts of its cultural identity, providing unique and immersive experiences for visitors. Additionally, Ilam's handicrafts, including intricate carpets, textiles, and pottery, are highly regarded. These artisanal products not only make for memorable souvenirs but also offer insights into the region's artistic heritage. Ilam also benefits from its strategic location near the Iran-Iraq border, attracting tourists from neighboring countries. As claimed by the provincial officials, the province's infrastructure is steadily improving, with new hotels, guesthouses, and tourist facilities being developed to accommodate the growing number of visitors. Ilam's diverse landscapes, historical treasures, rich cultural traditions, and improving tourist infrastructure position it as a burgeoning destination with significant potential for attracting both domestic and international travelers.

### Perspective



## Qazvin's Traditional Dolls Join National Intangible Legacy

Three traditional dolls from Qazvin province have been officially recognized as intangible cultural heritage, highlighting the region's rich cultural tapestry. Qazvin's director-general of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, on Tuesday, announced the registration of three dolls as national intangible cultural heritage.

Further elaborating the recognition, Alireza Khazaeli highlighted the inclusion of the skill of making these dolls, each from different regions of Qazvin province, in the national heritage list.

"The dolls, named 'Beklou' from Koohgir village in central Qazvin, 'Qolchaq' from Rudak village in Buin Zahra," he brought to light. "And 'Khale Ba'ba' from Ardabilak village are officially registered."

Khazaeli explained that some of these dolls hold ritual significance, while others are used for children's entertainment. All materials used in the creation of these dolls come from leftover sewing fabrics and pieces of wood, the director-general noted.



The official further outlined that with efforts of the province's heritage registration experts, a total of 106 intangible assets from Qazvin have been registered on the national heritage list to date.

Additionally, the registration files for four more intangible assets from the province are being prepared for submission, Khazaeli concluded.

Qazvin province, is a region steeped in rich cultural heritage and historical significance. As one of Iran's ancient capitals, Qazvin boasts a diverse array of cultural, architectural, and artistic treasures that reflect its storied past. The province is renowned for its historical monuments, including the Sa'd al-Saltaneh caravanserai one of the biggest roofed caravanserais in the country, and numerous exquisite mosques.

Cultural heritage in Qazvin extends beyond its architectural marvels to encompass a vibrant tapestry of intangible cultural elements. Traditional crafts, folklore, music, and local customs are integral to the province's cultural identity. Handicrafts such as carpet weaving, pottery, and miniature painting are celebrated for their intricate designs and craftsmanship. Qazvin is also known for its rich culinary heritage, featuring distinctive dishes, and various sweets and pastries that are cherished both locally and nationally.