



The tourism chief of Gilan province has announced plans to transform the house of Jalal Al-e-Ahmad in northern Iran into an anthropology museum. The initiative is expected to attract tourists with an interest in culture and literature, Mehr quoted Vahi Jahani as saying. Speaking to reporters, Jahani highlighted the significant role of Jalal Al-e-Ahmad in shaping the cultural and literary identity of the Talesh region, where the house is located. The official elaborated on the impact of Jalal Al-e-Ahmad's work on the local culture and literature, stating that restoring his house in Alalan Beach, Asalem county, and converting it into an anthropology museum would foster the development of cultural and literary tourism in Talesh. Moreover, Jahani announced plans for annual scientific and cultural conferences focusing on Jalal Al-e-Ahmad, which according to him could raise public awareness about the region's cultural values.

### Jalal Al-e-Ahmad's House to Become Anthropology Museum

## Tehran, Dushanbe Discuss Enhanced Tourism, Cultural Collaboration

Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, Seyyed Reza Salehi-Amiri, met with Tajikistan's Ambassador to Iran, Nizomiddin Zohidi, on Tuesday at the ministry's headquarters in Tehran to discuss strengthening ties in tourism and cultural cooperation.

Salehi-Amiri emphasized the shared cultural and historical bonds between the two nations and proposed several initiatives to enhance collaboration. "Given our commonalities, we should work on introducing unique values and shared capacities through the production of high-quality works and multilingual films," he said.

The minister further noted that the Iranian government prioritizes relations with neighboring countries, including Tajikistan. "We are fully prepared to develop ties with Tajikistan, and an upcoming visit by the President of Iran to Tajikistan could mark a new chapter in bilateral relations," Salehi-Amiri added.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Salehi-Amiri highlighted the potential for increased tourism between the two countries. Despite



their cultural and linguistic proximity, the current level of travel remains modest. He proposed better planning and agreements to facilitate travel, noting that Tehran alone hosts over 3,000 travel agencies ready to promote tourism. The minister also proposed joint cultural events, research, and restoration projects, as well as the organi-

zation of cultural days featuring intellectuals and artists from both nations. "A multilingual film showcasing the historical and cultural heritage of Iran and Tajikistan could also introduce our shared civilizational values to the world," he suggested. To further enhance connectivity, Salehi-Amiri mentioned plans to strengthen direct flights

between the two countries. He highlighted Kish Island's readiness to develop a health tourism city, which could attract Tajik tourists through direct flights from Dushanbe. Ambassador Zohidi expressed his appreciation for the Iranian minister's suggestions. "The cultural, religious, and historical commonalities between our nations provide an excellent foundation for closer ties," Zohidi stated. The envoy highlighted ongoing cultural collaborations and expressed enthusiasm for expanding tourism infrastructure, including the introduction of a direct Dushanbe-Shiraz flight. "Strengthening tourism links with Iran is a priority, and we are fully prepared to work on this," the ambassador added.

During the meeting, Zohidi proposed the complete removal of visa requirements between the two countries. Salehi-Amiri promised to advocate for the initiative at the governmental level. The two officials also discussed increasing cooperation in the field of handicrafts, with plans for joint training programs and the promotion of artisanal traditions in both countries.

## Iran Seeks UNESCO Recognition for Traditional Felt-making and Tirgan Festival

Two cultural heritage files from Iran, one for traditional felt-making and another for the Tirgan festival, have been submitted for evaluation by UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage Committee in 2026.

According to Sima Hadadi, Head of the Registration and Preservation of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Iran, the felt-making dossier was prepared in collaboration with six other countries, showcasing the regional significance of this ancient craft. Meanwhile, the Tirgan festival has been jointly submitted with Armenia to highlight this shared cultural celebration.

Talking at a recent press conference, Hadadi also highlighted Iran's extensive

efforts to document and preserve its intangible heritage. "We have registered 380 elements at the national level and 26 elements on the UNESCO list, ranking Iran fourth globally in the number of UNESCO intangible heritage inscriptions," she stated.

Elsewhere in his remarks, she noted that Iran had submitted a dossier for "Ayeneh-kari in Iranian architecture" to UNESCO, aiming to inscribe this intricate art form on the Intangible Cultural Heritage list. The dossier will be reviewed at the 20th session of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, scheduled to take in India soon.



### Traditional felt-making: an ancient craft

Traditional felt-making, or Namad-mali, is a time-honored craft in Iran, practiced for centuries in rural communities. The process involves layering, rolling, and pressing wool fibers with

hot water to create a durable textile known as Namad. Unique designs and techniques from regions like Semnan province reflect the cultural and environmental influences of the craft. Unlike woven or knitted textiles, felt is made entirely by

hand, using moisture and pressure to interlock wool fibers into compact, intricate patterns. This collaborative UNESCO nomination aims to preserve the cultural and artistic value of felt-making across the participating nations.

### Tirgan: a celebration of nature and heritage

The Tirgan festival, rooted in ancient Persian traditions, represents Iran's rich Zoroastrian heritage. Known as Jashn-e Tirgan, the festival's origin is tied to the legendary tale of Arash the Archer (Arash-e Kamangir), a hero who marked the boundaries of Persia with a single arrow shot, symbolizing sacrifice and unity. Celebrated on the 13th day of Tir, the fourth

month of the Persian calendar (early July), Tirgan emphasizes gratitude for nature, righteousness, and community as well. With its rejuvenating rituals, water festivities, bonfires, and beautiful symbolism, Tirgan serves as a reminder of the principles embraced by Zoroastrians, promoting light, righteousness, and reverence for nature. Available evidence suggests that the origins of mirror-making in Iran date back 2,700 years to the Achaemenid era, when polished stones and metals were transformed into reflective surfaces. These early mirrors laid the groundwork for Ayeneh-kari, a decorative art that flourished during the Safavid and Qajar periods.



## Redesign of Persepolis Museum underway

The head of the Persepolis Museum has announced the initiation of a redesign project aimed at transforming the entire space of the palace attributed to Xerxes I, situated within the UNESCO-registered Persepolis, into a fully functional museum. "This follows the relocation of administrative offices from the museum building, enabling the use of the space exclusively for museum purposes," IRNA quoted Mojtaba Doroudi as saying on Saturday. The official explained that discussions about expanding the museum's exhibition space have been ongoing for the past eight years. Doroudi highlighted that the Persepolis Museum is the oldest site museum in Iran, housing a rich collection of artifacts. It has also contributed significantly to the collections of the

National Museum of Iran. The palace building itself, considered the most well-preserved of the Achaemenid period, was excavated approximately 90 years ago by German archaeologist and Iranologist Ernst Herzfeld. Herzfeld, along with architect Karl Kresér, designed and partially restored the structure for use as a museum. According to Doroudi, the redesign will ensure the museum meets international standards, incorporating facilities such as laboratories, restoration workshops, a library, and administrative offices. Currently, the Persepolis Museum houses 3,000 registered historical items, which are displayed on a rotational basis. The artifacts span multiple historical periods, including the Elamite era, reflecting the rich history of the Marvdasht plain.

## Estil Wetland: a Destination for Nature Enthusiasts

Nestled within the lush landscapes of Gilan province and bordered by the Caspian Sea, Estil Wetland in Astara is a must-visit destination for nature enthusiasts and travelers. Known locally as "Hestel," meaning "water catchment," this pristine freshwater wetland spans 138 hectares and lies just seven kilometers from Astara city, near the picturesque Abbasabad village. Its accessibility via the Rasht-Astara road makes it a popular and convenient stop for travelers exploring northern Iran. Estil Wetland, often referred to as the "Floating Trees Wetland" or Estil Lake, captivates visitors with its unique floating reed beds and serene waters. It was recognized in 2005 as one of Gilan province's top five tourist destinations and is under the stewardship of Iran's Environmental Protection Organization, ensuring its ecological preservation.

The wetland is a critical water source for the surrounding 400 hectares of paddy fields, fed by rainfall, mountain rivers, and possibly natural springs. Surrounded by verdant forests, agricultural fields, and scenic mountains, Estil Wetland is also a haven for wildlife. The area supports 80 species of flora and fauna, including rare migratory birds and a small population of Maral and Caucasian red deer. The wetland perfectly blends natural beauty, wildlife, and cultural experiences, making it a must-visit spot in northern Iran. Whether you're boating on its serene wa-



ters, exploring nearby villages, or simply soaking in the breathtaking scenery, Estil Wetland promises an unforgettable journey into the heart of Gilan province. Visitors can marvel at the vibrant migratory birds, some of which travel from Central Europe, the Caspian region, and polar zones. The wetland's reed beds, willow trees, and tamarisk forests create a picturesque setting, while boating on the calm waters offers a tranquil escape. The reflections of surrounding landscapes in the water add a magical touch, perfect for photography enthusiasts. Nearby, Kuteme Village, Latoon Waterfall, and attractions like Tak Aghaj Castle, Bibi Yanlu Forest Park, and Ali Dashi Hot Springs enrich your itinerary. Astara's Seashell Beach and the Bird Garden are also worth exploring. Although Estil Wetland

can be visited year-round, spring (April and May) and autumn are the most delightful times. During these months, the weather is pleasant, and the natural scenery is at its most vibrant. However, autumn nights can be chilly, so visitors should plan their stays accordingly. For overnight stays, two hotels near the wetland and several cottages in nearby villages provide comfortable and budget-friendly lodging. Travelers from Tehran can drive via the Karaj-Qazvin Road or opt for frequent bus services to Astara. Alternatively, Ardabil Airport, an hour's drive from Astara, is the nearest air travel hub.

## Intl. tourism in Iran Sees Modest Recovery, Still 37% Below Pre-pandemic Levels

Iran hosted over 3.1 million foreign tourists in the first half of 2024, a 37% drop compared to pre-pandemic levels in 2019, according to updated figures from the UN

Tourism. Statistics released by the UN's tourism arm indicate that Iran welcomed 3,129,449 international visitors between January and June 2024, with fluctuations in monthly arrivals. January recorded 494,696 visitors, February 506,313, March 396,772, April 497,469, May 443,282, and June saw the highest influx with 790,917 tourists. This marks an improvement compared to 2023 when fewer than 3 million tourists entered Iran in the first seven months. However, the data does not specify the nationalities of the travelers. Iran's Ministry of Cultural Herit-

age, Tourism, and Handicrafts has noted that the reported figures include Iranian expatriates visiting for tourism purposes. Officials have emphasized that increasing the in-

flux of foreign tourists is critical for economic recovery and the development of the sector. The decline in foreign arrivals underscores the lingering impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Iran's tourism sector. While global tourism was projected to fully recover



Republic expects to reap a bonanza from its numerous tourist spots such as bazaars, museums, mosques, bridges, bathhouses, madrasas, mausoleums, churches, towers, and mansions, of which 28 are inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list.

Globally, the first nine months of 2024 saw approximately 1.1 billion international travelers, with the Middle East leading growth at a 29% increase compared to 2019. Europe and Africa have also surpassed pre-pandemic levels, while Asia-Pacific, like Iran, continues to recover gradually. The Islamic

Perspective



### Isfahan's Handicraft Exports Stand at \$7.6m in 9 Months

The value of Isfahan province's handicrafts exports stood at \$7.6 million during the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year 1403 (Mar. 20 - Dec. 20, 2024), the deputy provincial tourism chief has said.

The Deputy for Handicrafts at the Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Department of Isfahan province has announced that handicrafts from the province generated approximately \$7.6 million in exports over the past nine months.

According to Norollah Abdollahi, the province's handicraft exports totaled \$15 million in 1402. The official highlighted that Isfahan, despite not sharing borders with neighboring countries, relies on other provinces for export logistics.



"To address this issue, an agreement is reached between the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts and the Customs Administration to ensure that the point of origin for Isfahan's handicraft exports is documented on export papers, regardless of the departure location," Abdollahi explained.

He added that a significant portion of Isfahan's handicrafts is currently exported through Tehran's Imam Khomeini International Airport. "Previously, these exports were registered under Tehran's name, but the new agreement ensures that Isfahan is credited as the production and export source."

Moreover, Abdollahi noted that efforts are underway, in collaboration with the provincial governor-general, to activate Isfahan International Airport as a direct export hub for the province's handicrafts. As reported by IRNA, of the 602 recognized handicraft disciplines globally, 299 are associated with Iran, and 200 of these are tied to the historically and artistically rich province of Isfahan. Currently, over 70,000 artisans are active in Isfahan's handicraft industry, the report said.

Currently, a selection of 13 cities and three villages in Iran have been registered by the World Council of Handicrafts as "world cities of handicrafts".