

Zanjan Province's villages ready to host tourists

Iranica Desk

Tourism villages are among the most important destinations chosen by travelers, especially nature lovers, throughout the world. Thanks to their specific and unique attractions, these villages draw a huge number of those who travel to spend a few hours in peace and quiet and get away from the cities' hustle and bustle.

The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) understands rural tourism as "a type of tourism activity in which the visitor's experience is related to a wide range of products, generally linked to nature-based activities, agriculture, rural lifestyle/culture and sightseeing.

This industry, with its significant potential, allows the economy of the rural areas to prosper and helps generate jobs and create revenues for villagers. Thus a comprehensive plan should be devised to prepare conditions for the rural people in Iran to present their commodities to visitors and produce value-added benefits, IRNA wrote.

Based on the Sixth Economic Development Plan, 400 Iranian villages are identified as tourism targets, of which the share of the northwestern province of Zanjan is 15.

Abbas Mohammadi, deputy head of Zanjan Province's Islamic Revolution Housing Foundation, said that several tourism villages have been identified in the region in cooperation with the provincial Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization and the Management and Planning Organization. He said that a specific budget is provided every year in support of this type of action.

"Darsajin, Quzlou, Khorjahan and Laar are the names of the tourism villages having valuable historical textures," he noted, pointing out that Golabar-e Sofla, Khoein, Viyar and Anjalin are villages for which specific tourism plans have



Darsajin village
uspace.ir



Golabar-e Sofla village
hamdelizanjan.ir



Quzlou village
hamdelizanjan.ir



Khoein village
tripyar.com

been devised. The official noted that the people living in these tourism villages should try to preserve the historical textures of their

villages in the best possible manner. "The villagers can economically benefit from the arrival of tourists; for example, a number of eco lodges have been

established in Darsajin village, hosting many tourists from across the country, which helps generate revenue for its residents".

Mohammadi continued that the Seventh Economic Development Plan also has stipulated that more villages be recognized as tourism targets in the province.

Deputy Head of Zanjan Province's Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization Davoud Abyan noted that rural tourism is one of the key opportunities in terms of potential growth for rural areas, noting that special attention is paid by the organization to the issue.

"Thanks to their untapped potentials, valuable historical textures, unique natural landscapes as well as old traditions and customs, the villages play a significant role in attraction of tourists to the province," he said.

He noted that the organization will make its best efforts to identify the villages which are suitable to be recognized as tourist destinations, and draw up proper strategies to introduce them to people all over the country.

The official said that Qozlu village has been identified as an ecotourism destination, pointing out that steps have been taken to preserve the traditional architectural style of the village and also introduce its souvenirs to visitors.

He called for related organizations to get more involved in the recognition and preservation of the province's tourism villages and facilitate the process of building eco lodges and offering related training courses for the villagers.

He believes that each rural house can be turned into an eco-lodge, saying tourists act as agents introducing the attractions of the village to other people, especially through social media platforms.

"Fortunately, everyone came to believe that preventing the migration of rural people to urban areas and paying attention to agricultural tourism can lead to economic prosperity in villages and prepare conditions for the villagers to benefit from having a fixed income resource," he continued.

Ancient cities of Qumis and Bastam

One part of the principal road between the present-day settlements of Abbasabad [on the east] and Lasgird [on the west] was included by the Arab geographers in the region of Qumis. In the tenth century, Qumis came within the framework of the possessions of the Buyid Dynasty who, however, paid part of the revenues from this region, as well as from the neighboring Rey —200,000 dinars in all—to the Samanids.

Clearly, this political boundary was purely artificial and therefore underwent frequent modifications. At the time of the Arab conquest, the eastern portion of Qumis was part of Khorasan. In the eastern part of Qumis, between Abbasabad and Shahrud, there seems never to have been any important settlements. Here the last spurs of the Khorasan's mountains descend into the

plain; the road passes by the foothills and occasionally through them.

These gradually diminishing ridges offered a suitable corridor for Turkmen raids, which ceased only with the conquest of Etek by the Russians. Until that time, it was considered unsafe to cross this stretch without an armed escort; twice a month small military detachments would depart, one eastward from Shahrud, one westward from Mazinan; the two would meet in the village of Miyandasht and exchange their roles; there is in Miyandasht an old caravanserai built by Shah 'Abbas the Great and a new one constructed in a fortress like fashion from fired brick.

There is a fertile stretch along the river Shahrud, which

flows from the snowy mountains of Shah Kuh, a branch of the Alborz Mountains that separates the Caspian coastland from the Iranian plateau, and that reaches here a height of 13,000 feet. The town of Shahrud itself was never of any great significance in the past, and is not mentioned by the tenth-century geographers.

The town of Bastam, situated somewhat above Shahrud in the same fertile river valley, has had greater historical importance. It is believed to have been founded in the sixth century by Bastam, governor of Khorasan, Qumis, Gorgan, and Tabarestan, who in the time of troubles tried



Remains of Qumis
ivius.org

to seize the throne. In the ninth century, one of the first Sufi sheikhs, Bayazid (more correctly Abu Yazid Bastami) lived there; at the time of the Arab geographers, Bastam was a modest but prosperous town.

The existing edifice of the sheikh's mausoleum, like other old buildings of Bastam, goes back to the fourteenth century. A detailed description of the mausoleum, together with a drawing of it, is in Sanf al-Dawla's book. Inside the building, at a passage from one part to another, is an Arabic inscription indicating the date of the construction. The mausoleum is in the southwestern corner of a courtyard that is flanked by a few other build-

ings; among these is a mosque that is believed to antedate Bayazid's mausoleum. This mosque is flanked by a minaret distinctive in that it moves when people stand on its top. The tower is built with very thin bricks and leans slightly sideways: this does not adversely affect the solidity of its structure.

Near the mausoleum is also an edifice in which a dried mummy is kept. A passage leads from this courtyard into a madrasa, in it there is a beautiful arch with an inscription indicating the date of the construction: 1313. From among the older monuments of Bastam, the Friday mosque (built in 1316) is also noteworthy.

The above is a lightly edited version of chapter entitled 'Qumis and Gorgan', from a book entitled, 'An Historical Geography of Iran', written by W. Barthold and published by Princeton University Press, Princeton.

Mausoleum of Bayzid Bastami
top-travel.ir

