

Shiraz leading the way in medical tourism across Iran



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The tourism industry is undeniably one of the most profitable industries globally. Today, there is a fierce competition among numerous countries around the world to capture the attention of travelers. In order to stand out, these countries strategically design well-thought-out programs to entice tourists. One of the crucial factors in the tourism industry, not just in our country but worldwide, is religious and medical tourism. Living in an Islamic nation abundant with revered religious sites and a flourishing medical sector, we must fully appreciate the significance of

these two aspects.

Fars Province, especially the vibrant city of Shiraz, shines as one of Iran's top medical hubs. Boasting remarkable health care infrastructure, world-class medical professionals, and cutting-edge facilities, it propels the vision of creating an international health city. The goal is to unlock and maximize the healing capabilities of this city, propelling it to become the nation's leading medical tourism destination.

Taking a holistic approach to health tourism can be a key asset in fostering a sustainable economy in this field.

Speaking in an interview with ISNA, Rouhollah Rav-

anshad, a tourism official from Fars Province's Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organizations, said, "In the past, health tourism used to follow a more traditional approach, where travelers from both within and outside the country, including Persian Gulf littoral states, would visit and avail themselves of medical services. Remarkably, this cycle continues to persist even today."

He added that Fars Province takes pride in its rich cultural heritage, vibrant tourism opportunities, and exquisite handicrafts. With the aim of organizing the realm of health and catering to the needs

of health service seekers, both domestically and internationally, the Health Tourism Society has been established. This esteemed organization collaborates with 83 certified travel and tour agencies, ensuring top-notch services for those seeking health-related services.

With an emphasis on the fact that this important initiative was realized through collaboration with the Medical Sciences University, important and practical approaches are being pursued to organize health tourism. Undoubtedly, the establishment of the Health Tourism Society can be a turning point in carrying out activities in

this field.

Health tourism encompasses a wide range of areas, including advanced medical treatments, therapeutic clinics, internal and cosmetic surgeries, as well as traditional medicine therapies.

Lowering treatment and accommodation costs in the field of medicine, embracing new technologies, and equipping advanced medical devices can greatly enhance the therapeutic capabilities of this city. These initiatives can turn it into a leading medical tourism destination in the country, attracting visitors from far and wide.

Ravanshad revealed that since mid-March 2023,

over 17,000 health tourists have flocked to Shiraz. He emphasized that the expenses for treatment, surgery, and accommodation vary for each tourist. Furthermore, he confidently exclaimed, "Undeniably, health tourism in Shiraz plays a pivotal role in fostering growth across multiple sectors in the tourism industry."

He continued that this organization has provided specialized training for 400 health tourism guides, and out of this group, 150 to 200 individuals possess health cards. It was mentioned that these tourism guides are generally fluent in Arabic, as the majority of health tourists visiting

Shiraz are Arabic speakers. Moreover, we also have guides who are proficient in other languages.

Ravanshad noted that several travel and tourism agencies, equipped with medical professionals from Fars Province and relevant medical facilities, have been launched not only in Oman but also in other Islamic countries.

"It's worth noting that various entities involved in health tourism, including both public and private sectors, medical organizations, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Traffic Police are cooperating with the aim of increasing the number of health tourists in this field," he concluded.

Forced resettlement and cultural exchange between Roman and Sassanid empires

As a result of the nearly constant warfare between the Roman and Sassanid empires, massive numbers of individuals, both soldiers and civilians, were deported from their homelands and forcibly resettled. This process was another important, though unfortunate, engine of exchange between the two empires.

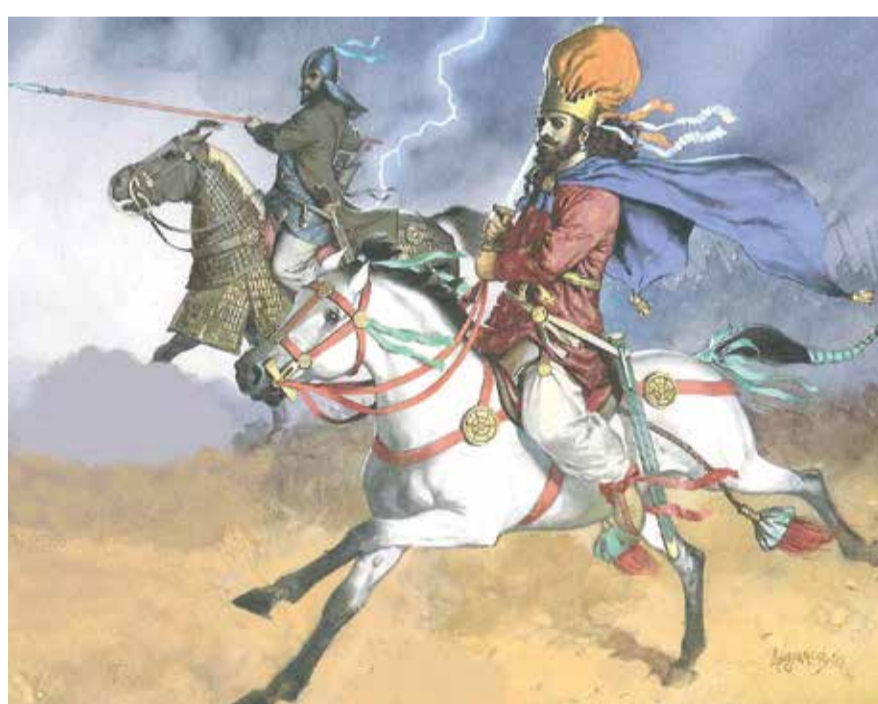
In especially the campaigns of Shapur I in the third century until those of Kosrow II in the seventh century, the Sassanid kings systematically resettled the populations of conquered areas, carefully skimming off aristocrats and skilled craftsmen whose talents and manpower they exploited to build their cities, execute their civil engineering projects, and defend their eastern and Caucasian borders. The Persians often kept family and even community structures intact in their deportation of populations, sometimes even "recreating" a ravaged city within a Sassan-

id province.

This active policy of deportation enriched the Sassanid empire immensely, both economically and technologically, to the point that some have even argued that the prospect of gaining human capital was the primary motivation for Sassanid military campaigns. However, this phenomenon of sustained large-scale deportations was a double-edged sword for the Sassanids, since it augmented their vibrant native Christian populations, as well as enriched the empire with skilled craftsmen.

In addition to the craftsmen who produced art objects, the Sassanids captured a large amount of booty during their incursions, facilitating the movement of Roman art objects into their realm, some of which the king took as his own share.

Population transfers were a function of military success but could take on a symbolic significance as well. The Romans did not



have a developed policy of deportation, as they did not enjoy as regular or as spectacular military successes as the Sassanids. While the Romans did not gain as much economically or technologically from the Persian captives, when

possible Roman emperors resettled Persian captives in Roman territory as farm laborers to repopulate ravaged provinces and, if nothing else, for propagandistic reasons. Ardashir I equipped four hundred men, picked for

their impressive physical stature, with splendid clothes and arms and sent them as envoys to Severus Alexander. Ardashir I clearly intended the spectacle to overawe the emperor, since, the envoys were instructed to

demand "back" Ardashir's Achaemenid inheritance from the Romans. Very much attuned to the symbolism, Severus Alexander stripped them of their finery and resettled them in Phrygia to show his disdain for Ardashir's request.

After the victory of Roman ruler Galerius over Sassanid king Narseh, Diocletian resettled Persian captives taken in battle in Thrace; Constantius II reportedly resettled Persian captives taken in raids into Sasanian territory in Thrace as well. The Notitia Dignitatum, a document of the Late Roman Empire, records a division of equites Persae Clibanarii (a Sasanian Persian, late Roman and Byzantine military unit of armored heavy cavalry) that was possibly formed by troops who fled to Rome with the Sassanid prince Hormozd.

Justinian, an emperor especially tuned to symbolic gestures, formed a detachment of captured Persian soldiers called the Per-

so-Justiniani who carried out the very practical task of fighting the Goths in Italy, much like his Justinian Vandali, who fought in the east. A funerary inscription of a cavalryman from the Perso-Justiniani, which shows some level of integration with the local population, is extant at Grado, a town in the north-eastern Italian region of Friuli-Venezia Giulia.

Although the amount of booty, and thus visual material, that the Roman armies captured pales in comparison to that taken by the Sassanids, it was still a considerable point of entry for many foreign ideas. The presence of the Persian armies in the Roman Near East and Egypt also fostered cultural exchange. After Heraclius's seventh-century invasion, many Christians emigrated from the shattered Sassanid Empire and settled inside Roman territory, including Constantinople, bringing new ideas with them.