

Magnificent northern railway: A Journey through Iranian history and heritage



● MEHR

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Iran's northern railway is an enchanting and unparalleled route, showcasing a diverse blend of history and heritage. It spans over 1,000 kilometers, forming an integral part of the trans-Iranian railway and earning its esteemed status as a global heritage site. The launch of the first provincial department of Trans-Iranian Railway's World Heritage Site in Mazandaran Province promises to begin a modern chapter of exploration and experience.

It's hard to find someone who hasn't laid eyes on the captivating and unique part of the railway route of Mazandaran Province, with the length of 331-kilometers, or experienced a journey along this route without being mesmerized by its natural, historical, and architectural beauty, IRNA wrote.

The operation of the northern railway, as a part of trans-Iranian railway, commenced in 1937, and quickly became a prominent symbol of modernity in the lives of the local people. This architectural and industrial marvel, coupled with its profound integration into the



social, economic, and industrial fabric of Mazandaran, has transformed the railway into an inseparable and vibrant component of everyday life.

This charming and fascinating element of modernity, which is in its ninth decade of operation, with all its infrastructure components and surrounding social issues, has become an attractive destination for cultural heritage lovers.

It is so appealing that two years ago, as part of Iran's national railway, it was registered on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

The most beautiful and unique part of this 1,400-kilometer historical and world-renowned route, which extends from Bandar-e Torkaman, in Golestan Province, to Imam Khomeini Port, passes through Mazandaran Province and



the heart of the Alborz Mountains.

The head of the newly-established provincial department of the Trans-Iranian Railway World Heritage Site in Mazandaran Province has stated that their main objectives are documenting and updating the architectural, natural, and historical features within the vicinity of the railway fleet located in northern Iran.

Abolfazl Nikubayan also emphasized the continuous monitoring and preservation measures.

"Efforts are underway to establish the first railway museum in the region. Promoting railway tourism and attracting foreign visitors are also among the primary goals of this department," he said. While appreciating the efforts of the experts and managers of the Islamic Republic of Iran Railway Company and the Northern Railway Department for the finalization of the global registration dossier, he stated: Undoubtedly, without these efforts, this dossier would not have reached fruition. Since the preparation and compilation of the dossier, the experienced railway experts, along with a team from the World Heritage Registration Department of the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization, had extensive collaborations, including cultural liaison with UNESCO.

"Now, with the establishment of the provincial department of the Trans-Iranian Railway World Heritage Site in Mazandaran Province, we still need the same collaboration and concern," he noted.

Reviving Godin Tappeh, a vital transformation from neglect to fame

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Godin Tappeh (Godin Hill) of Kangavar, Kermanshah Province, is one of the most important historical sites dating back to the Median period, having international recognition and fame, said the head of Anahita National Heritage Site.

Morteza Geravand said that it holds the potential to be internationally recognized and registered, ISNA wrote.

"This ancient hill has only been excavated once, back in 1965. The excavation was carried out by a Canadian team, headed by a famous archaeologist Cuyler Young. Their dedicated efforts unveiled significant archaeological findings, shedding light on important historical information associated with the site."

He added that through these excavations, it was discovered that Godin Tappeh encompasses seven cultural layers spanning prehistoric, historical, and Islamic periods, covering a span of seven thousand years. The second layer specifically corresponds to the Median period.

He noted that, unfortunately, this important historical site has been neglected and left untouched for approximately 60 years in terms of archaeological exploration. Consequently, the structures that were once discovered by the Young archaeologi-



cal team during their excavations have sadly deteriorated and been lost over the past decades.

"We are taking action to revive and

transform this historical mound into a renowned archaeological research center. The first step is to establish its boundaries and safeguarding zone," he

noted.

Recently, a team of archaeologists, headed by Kamyar Abdi, an esteemed Iranian archaeologist, who is also a faculty member at Shahid Beheshti University in Tehran, has been actively working on this project.

In order to define the boundaries of this ancient site, around 20 excavations were undertaken, which led to the discovery of certain cultural artifacts, adding to our knowledge and understanding.

He added that the next step for reviving Godin Tappeh, which is part of the Anahita Temple National Heritage Site, is implementing preservation programs.

"In the final phase, as we delve deeper into our archeological explorations, our ultimate goal is to transform this ancient mound into a captivating museum, a prestigious research center, or a national heritage site," he said.

Geravand said, "By putting these measures and programs into action, Godin Tappeh has the potential to be recognized worldwide, just like Hasanlu Hill in West Azarbaijan Province, which is currently on the path to globalization."

The site has played a significant role in the field of transit during its cultural and political heyday, so actions need to be taken on it as part of a national project.

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