

Kerman Grand Mosque, a historic masterpiece



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Many cities in Iran boast historical monuments, which intriguingly stand as some of the most captivating tourist attractions in their respective cities. Kerman, a beautiful city located in southeastern Iran and renowned for its wealth of historical monuments, is no exception. The Mozaffari Mosque, popularly known as the Kerman Grand Mosque, is a historic masterpiece displaying unique and magnificent architecture that never fails to capture the attention of tourists. Construction of the Kerman Grand Mosque took place around 1349 CE, during the reign of "Amir Mozaffari al-Din Muhammad Mozaffari Meybodi," one of the kings of the Muzaffarids. Consequently, the mosque bears the original name of Mozaffari Grand Mosque. Historical documents and accounts reveal that the Grand Mosque was initially constructed outside the city of Kerman. However, as the city expanded over the years, it eventually encompassed

the mosque within its boundaries. Legend has it that Muhammad Mozaffari Meybodi engaged in a fierce battle against the "Jerman and Oghan," a Turk tribe. In the face of uncertainty, he sought to create a lasting legacy for himself if he emerged victorious. After surviving the war, he came to Kerman and resolved to build this very mosque. It is said that he utilized the proceeds from farming and selling his agricultural products in Meybod to finance the mosque's construction. Thus began the story of this magnificent structure. The mosque features three entrance doors on its west, east, and north sides. The courtyard spans 66.5 meters in length and 49 meters in width, covering an area of 3,258 square meters. The east entrance, adorned with exquisite tilework, captivates visitors' eyes, further enhanced by the presence of a clock atop the entrance, adding to its splendor. This mosque is part of a group of four-ivan mosques. The tilework within the mosque is renowned for

its remarkable beauty. Notably, the eastern entrance boasts breathtaking muqarnas works that make it a must-visit attraction. The mosaic tiles in the mihrab, found on the mosque's western side, deserve special mention. Some experts regard this mosaic tiling, along with the eastern entrance, as the most prized aspect of the building. The mihrab's edges are made of marble, while delicate calligraphy lines on the tiles, combined with a harmonious yellow color palette, contribute to its magnificence. However, venture beyond the west side of the mihrab, and you'll encounter the shrine of a poet. This shrine belongs to "Raji Kermani," a Persian poet. Like many historical landmarks in the country, Mozaffari Mosque has suffered damage throughout its history and has undergone numerous reconstructions. During the reign of Shah Abbas II, a restoration project breathed new life into this historic mosque. Additionally, Mohammad Taghi

Khan Durrani, the ruler of Kerman during the Zand Dynasty, rebuilt sections of the mosque in 1763, as evidenced by inscriptions atop the minaret. Another instance of restoration followed the gunfire by Agha Mohammad Khan Qajar, which damaged the eastern entrance. The Kerman Grand Mosque has endured cycles of damage and reconstruction throughout its history. Today, this historical complex stands proudly as a notable attraction within Kerman Province. Notably, its reconstruction owes much to the grand architect of Isfahan, "Inayatullah ibn Nizamuddin." His name adorns the mosque's grand ivan, symbolizing his significant contributions to the carvings, tilework, and overall reconstruction of the mosque. Acknowledging its historical and cultural significance, the Kerman Mozaffari Grand Mosque, commonly referred to as Kerman Grand Mosque, was officially registered on Iran's National Heritage List on March 3, 1961.



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Ancient underground city unveiled in Dolatabad village of Isfahan Province

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The first underground city of Tiran and Karvan was discovered in the village of Kurd-e Oliya, Isfahan Province, in 2016. It was a hand-carved site with an area of over 20,000 square meters and 80 entrances. Studies have shown that its history dates back to the pre-Islamic era. One interesting fact is that a part of this underground city is now open to tourists. But the discovery of another underground city in Dolatabad village, located in Tiran and

Karvan, in the current year has grabbed everyone's attention. This city, which has likewise been hand-carved, is situated beneath several houses of the village and is believed to date back to the pre-Islamic era. Head of Tiran and Karvan's Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Department Mohsen Mazaheri said that this hand-carved site has been expanded to an area of 10,000 square meters, ISNA wrote. Throughout time, the villagers of the rural area engaged in diverse activities within this vi-

city. They utilized it as a storage facility, or a shelter for their livestock. Occasionally, the entrance doors remained closed and went unused. "Dolatabad village is situated five kilometers from Kurd-e Oliya village. Upon receiving information about the discovery of intriguing hand-crafted structures in this village, we promptly delved into the matter. A thorough examination of the site revealed its historical and ancient significance, leading to its recognition as an underground city," he said.

He added that this site has entrances in the houses or beneath, with a well located next to the entrance. Chambers and rooms are also seen in its discovered tunnels. Overall, the complex's structure has given it a resemblance to a city, leading experts to introduce it as an underground city. Mazaheri noted that there are different theories regarding the purpose of these structures. Some theories suggest that they were used for residential purposes, while others emphasize their role as sacred places.

In some theories, the use of these structures for defensive purposes has also been mentioned. However, a precise understanding of their intended use requires further research and investigation. He said that the site encompasses about 25 houses. All parts of this underground site are interconnected, and the people living above them are aware of its significance and try to protect it. Moreover, he gleefully added that the village's council has received guidance on preserving

the site. Additionally, the supervision of the city's Cultural Heritage Department ensures that the area is given proper attention. "Considering that the people of Dolatabad village are the owners of these ancient structures, we hope to establish a union or cooperative as soon as possible, with the participation of the rural people. Once archaeological measures are completed in this area, we aspire for this underground city to become a tourist attraction," he concluded.



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