

Sarigol National Park: A natural haven in North Khorasan Province

Iranica Desk

Areas protected for conservation actually consist of buffer zones and ecosystem services areas, which are intended to preserve biodiversity and promote the continuation of ecological processes in completely natural conditions, under management control.

The use of these areas is allowed only under certain conditions, and measures should be taken to prevent any negative impact on the ecological processes of the ecosystems involved.

Sarigol National Park in North Khorasan Province is one of the most important protected areas in Iran. With an area of approximately 28,000 hectares (6,000 hectares for the national park and 22,000 hectares for the protected area), it is not only one of the most significant protected areas in

North Khorasan, but in Iran.

Some of the most important natural and tourist attractions in North Khorasan Province, such as Rudkhani River, Darreh-ye Erdgan, Sar Cheshmeh Dam Lake, and Sarigol Dam Lake, are located in this area.

Sarigol National Park was designated as a protected area by the Department of the Environment in 1974. The department has since upgraded the protected area's security zone to a national park. Sarigol National Park is one of the most beautiful and ecologically significant areas in North Khorasan Province. Its unique flora and fauna attract a large number of tourists. Visitors are required to obtain a permit for visiting this national park and should follow the environmental protection rules strictly. It is advisable to visit this national park for three to four hours.



Ganjan village



Eyzi waterfall

Moorlands

Moorlands form the largest area of pastures in Sarigol Valley and are among the best habitats for wild sheep, goats, and leopards.

Plain area

The plain area covers a small part of the total region (about 2,000 hectares). This area is the habitat of about 25 deer. The difference in altitude between the lowest point in the southern plain (1,250 meters) and the highest point in the mountains (3,050 meters) is estimated at about 1,800 meters. This difference in altitude has created

diverse ecosystems and added to the biodiversity of the region. Today, many plant species from both warm and cold regions can be seen in Sarigol.

The valley floors in the plain area are scattered with tree and shrub species such as barberry, willow, fig, and walnut, while in the mountainous areas, elm species can be seen scattered and dense.

Eyzi waterfall

Eyzi waterfall is located five kilometers from Eyzi village in the western foothills of the Shah Jahan Mountains, and 15 kilometers southeast

of Esfarayen. The Eyzi River is the source of the waterfall. This river irrigates some of the agricultural lands of Eyzi.

Ganjan village

Nestled in the protected area of Sarigol and surrounded by two other ancient villages, Ganjan village is cherished by the locals. A significant water source, Ganjan River, which is a part of Sarigol National Park, originates from this village and flows northward towards Qal'eh Sefid village. Rural people rely on the water from this river for their agricultural needs.



Sarigol National Park

Global registration of Sadeh Festival signifies importance of local cultures

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Sadeh Festival was recently registered as the common intangible heritage of Iran and Tajikistan on the UNESCO World Heritage List. It is an ancient Iranian ceremony that continues to be celebrated annually in certain regions of Iran, on the evening of the tenth day of the Iranian month of Bahman, corresponding to January 30th.

Fire, water, wind, and soil are considered sacred elements that play practical roles in numerous Iranian celebrations. Ancient Persians believed that the fire lit on this day symbolized the warming of the earth and the preparation for the arrival of spring.

Alireza Hassanzadeh, responsible for compiling and preparing the dossier for the global registration of the Sadeh Festival, told ISNA that this Zoroastrian-rooted ceremony is celebrated in several cities, including Kerman, Yazd, Shiraz, Isfahan, and part of Khorasan Province.

He added that the dossier was prepared in collaboration with communities and

groups responsible for safeguarding intangible elements, following the same approach used for other intangible heritage dossiers.

He noted that while the Sadeh Festival primarily belongs to the cultural domain of ancient Iran, it is also celebrated by the people of Tajikistan.

"The global recognition of this ceremony calls for increased support from governmental institutions to local communities and the organizers of this ritual. On other hand, collaboration and assistance from local communities are essential to ensure the continued preservation of this cultural element," he said.

Regarding the revitalization and preservation of the Sadeh Festival, he highlighted the importance of taking certain actions, adding intangible heritage dossiers typically include precautionary measures aimed at preserving and promoting these elements.

He believes that it is the responsibility of governmental institutions to facilitate holding this celebration in various regions

of the country and provide support to the people and non-governmental organizations involved.

Hassanzadeh noted that the Sadeh Festival holds a significant place in Iranian culture and history, serving as a symbol of unity among ethnic groups throughout the centuries. He said it is deeply rooted in the literary and identity resources of the Iranian people, with references to the celebration found in the "Shahnameh". The festival is considered a national heritage with high cultural and identity value.

The demand for the global registration of Sadeh Festival as an ancient celebration reflects the desire for national solidarity and recognition of its importance. While the festival is primarily celebrated in Iran and Tajikistan, its significance extends beyond these borders.

He reiterated that it is important to distinguish Sadeh from other fire ceremonies held in various countries during spring celebrations, pointing out that Sadeh has its own unique definition and cultural significance.

