

Rich heritage of Chaleshtar Castle in Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari Province

Iranica Desk

Chaleshtar Castle, also known as "Khodarahm Khan Castle," is situated in the city of Chaleshtar in Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari Province. Historically, Chaleshtar served as the administrative center for Chaharmahal during the Safavid era.

In honor of this significance, a castle was erected as the seat of governance for the ruler of Chaharmahal, overseeing the entire region. While the original castle vanished, Chaleshtar Castle was constructed during the Qajar period, serving as the residence of the ruler and featuring four gates, which were once shut for the castle's protection. Notably, the architecture of Chaleshtar Castle reflects a fusion of Iranian and European styles.

Some historical and archaeological sources attribute the construction of Chaleshtar Castle to the year 1905, a date inscribed on one of the castle's keystones. During the Safavid era, the ruler resided in Chaleshtar and managed the surrounding areas through appointed village leaders. However, in the Qajar period, with the appointment of Hosseinqoli Khan as the Ilkhan of Bakhtiari, the rulers of Chaleshtar were stripped of their positions, assuming roles as landowners and peasants.

The Chaleshtar Castle comprises several sections, including the Shahneshin, interior, stone porch, warehouse, bathhouse, and stable. The structure features a porch with 10 stone columns, connected to the Shahneshin by the interior. The castle complex encompasses five porches, five interior rooms, and 40 columns. Intricate mythical designs adorning the walls depict flowers, angels, and scenes of daily life, captivating visitors with their beauty and artistry. The building spans a northern



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and southern part, covering an area of approximately 12,000 square meters. Reflecting Qajar-era architecture, the castle building's northern section re-

mains intact, while the southern part, which was about 90% destroyed, has been reconstructed. Khodarahm Khan Chaleshtari, the son of Mohammad Reza

Khan, the ruler of Chaharmahal, is credited as the builder of the Chaleshtar Castle. The castle's construction signifies its historical role as the ruler's residence,

where administrative affairs and political meetings for the governance of Chaharmahal took place. It is believed that during World

War I, Allameh Dehkhoda, a prominent Iranian literary writer, philologist, and lexicographer, traveled to Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari and resided in Chaleshtar Castle for two years, where he utilized the castle's library to write his dictionary. The architecture of Chaleshtar Castle closely resembles other buildings built during the Qajar period, but also showcases a blend of Iranian and European art.

The standing stone columns and embossed designs of Chaleshtar Castle offer a captivating view. The rooms within the Chaleshtar Castle complex are adorned with a combination of Persian and Western art paintings, which reached their peak during the Qajar period. Depictions of Leili and Majnun, Yusuf and Zuleikha, along with verses from the Qur'an, can be found on the walls of the castle.

Triangular symmetrical architecture can also be observed in some parts of the castle's corridors. Through the reconstruction of the castle, which began in the year 2000 and was completed in 2003, and the generous donation of 640 ethnographic items by a cultural heritage enthusiast and scholar of the province, the ground floor was converted into a museum named "Work and Life" (Anthropology Museum) to showcase some of the donated items.

The museum displays various aspects of the lives of the indigenous people of the Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari region and the tribes of that area, including tools, furniture, and dairy equipment used by the people of the region up to a hundred years ago. Sculptures of people wearing local Bakhtiari and Qashqai clothing can also be found in the museum. The architecture of the underground area of the museum is also noteworthy, as it was built without the use of metal or wood.

Enchanting attractions of Aghasht village in Alborz Province

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Aghasht village is situated 75 kilometers from Tehran, in Chendar District of Savojbolagh in Karaj, Alborz Province. If you have visited Barghan village, Aghasht is located in the same area, boasting unspoiled natural beauty and villas that have not been excessively developed, preserving the charm and simplicity of the village.

To reach Aghasht village, head east of Karaj. This close proximity to the capital offers Tehranites the advantage of experiencing a peaceful weekend around the area. Some 800 people call this village home, and a river along with Iran's Hogwarts Castle are its main tourist attractions. Nestled in the heart of Aghasht's mountains, Hogwarts Castle awaits you, accompanied by a river and a waterfall.

If you search online, you will discover that the main Hogwarts Castle is the primary location for the Harry Potter franchise. However, it is important to note that the one in Karaj is a villa built in the style of European castles, the facade of which is inspired by European Renaissance architecture, Greek, and Roman styles. It is said that its construction took 10 years. Due to its location in a mountainous area, Aghasht enjoys a very pleasant climate, and even in the hot seasons its cool breeze rejuvenates your spirit. The lowest recorded temperature for this area in the summer has been 11 degrees Celsius.

Aghasht is a recreational area with stunning landscapes for the residents of the two large cities of Karaj and Tehran, attracting many people for weekend getaways.

This village boasts an ancient bathhouse that remained active until 1991, adorned with beautifully decorated walls. Additionally, the village features a spacious sports field and two picturesque mosques.

Notably, the Shorshorband waterfall stands as a highlight of this village, situated in a mountainous region. Accessing it requires appropriate hiking attire and footwear. The path to the waterfall includes numerous slopes, offering stunning views of the surrounding nature, along with chamomile flowers, butterflies, and the melodic sounds of singing birds, creating an enchanting experience for nature enthusiasts and tourists.

Aghasht River, with its three primary branches, infuses the village with freshness, vitality, and a positive ambiance, allowing most visitors to revel in its beauty. For accommodation, one can utilize the neighboring villages and settle in areas offering villa rentals.

The optimal time to visit Aghasht Castle is during the spring and summer, owing to its mountainous climate. However, some tourists prefer the autumn season for its vibrant, colorful nature. In the winter, the village is blanketed in snow, offering its own unique attractions for tourists.



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