

Magnificent Malek Mansion, a testament to Iran's renewed legacy

Iranica Desk

Throughout Iran, a rich tapestry of mansions and lordly houses from the Qajar period adorns the landscape. These architectural gems stand as a testament to the opulence and influence of their original owners, who were often affluent individuals or shrewd capitalists. The proprietors of these grand estates held sway over villages, or were astute merchants and entrepreneurs with substantial financial resources and extensive commercial networks, prompting them to erect these edifices for both business and social gatherings. Among these historical treasures is the Malek Mansion, a captivating tourist attraction nestled in Bushehr. Constructed during the Qajar era, this sprawling estate belonged to the renowned merchant Malik Al-Tajjar. Spanning over 4,000 square meters, the Malek Mansion

is a testament to the grandeur and vision of its creator. Following a visit to France, Malek Al-Tajjar drew inspiration from a French palace and the architectural motifs of Bushehr to fashion this magnificent residence. However, after Malek Al-Tajjar faced financial turmoil and subsequent bankruptcy, the property was acquired by a group of Englishmen for military purposes, serving as a military outpost for an extended period, IRNA wrote. In the early 2000s, Jafar Purkabgani, the governor of Bushehr, procured the estate from its heirs, ushering in a new chapter for the historic mansion. Subsequently, the Malek Mansion came under the custodianship of the Cultural Heritage and Tourism Organization of Bushehr Province, ensuring its preservation and continued legacy as a cultural and historical landmark. The mansion is a complex architectural marvel, comprising several

distinct parts. The entrance serves as a grand introduction, offering an expansive and welcoming space that seamlessly links the urban surroundings to the estate. A majestic staircase leads from this area to the main building, setting the stage for the grandeur within. The platform, forming the second part of the monument, is intricately connected to the main building, again via a striking set of stairs. The entrance gate, considered the third part, encompasses the courtyard space, adorned with three pairs of columns leading to the main structure, featuring captivating ebony wood decorations with intricate metal ornaments. As the largest and most elaborate section, the main building stands as the fourth part of this architectural marvel, boasting two floors adorned with exquisite wall paintings. Moreover, the interconnected gardens, each separated by rows of

walls, offer a unique landscape, with distinct decorations and landscaping, creating a harmonious yet diverse outdoor space. This national monument, comprised of buildings and internal pavilions, was designed as a seasonal residence, catering to various conditions and needs. It encompasses a royal seat, multiple halls, a bathhouse, numerous rooms, and towers, all within its two-story expanse. While the main complex currently remains unoccupied, the pavilions and internal buildings previously served as housing for low-income individuals for several decades. Despite undergoing several renovations, the estate gradually fell into disrepair over time. However, in 2020, restoration work commenced, aiming to repurpose the mansion for residential and hospitality use, breathing new life into this beautiful and historically significant property.



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Art of Khorjin-bafi in Hassanabad

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Hassanabad, located 110 kilometers from Isfahan, is renowned for its historical significance and lush greenery amidst the desert. The city's residents have upheld traditional handicrafts, particularly *Khorjin-bafi* (saddlebag-weaving), for centuries. Hassanabad boasts a unique blend of traditional and modern elements, with many individuals maintaining a rural lifestyle and engaging in weav-

ing items such as kilims, rugs, towels, tablecloths, shawls, and *khorjin* in their homes. Ali Morad Sadeghi, an artist deeply involved in *khorjin-bafi* since 1989, collaborates with his wife and brother in this craft. He explained that *khorjins*, characterized by their geometric and angular designs, were originally utilized for transporting loads on pack animals and were also part of a bride's dowry. The intricate weaving process involves the use of warp and weft

threads, employing materials ranging from fabric and felt to wool and paper. While traditionally cotton threads were used, modern *khorjins* incorporate filament and polypropylene. Sadeghi described the *khorjin* as a knotless handwoven fabric, typically with a width of 30 to 90 centimeters, woven in a ribbed pattern. His workshop produces various types of *khorjin* for motorcycles, bicycles, and donkeys, showcasing the continued relevance of this traditional

craft in contemporary settings. He emphasized the significance of warp and weft threads in *khorjin* weaving, woven from fabric edges and remnants of felt, wool, and paper. Historically, cotton threads cultivated and processed in Hassanabad were used, and nomadic communities utilized goat hair and colored wool for weaving *khorjins*. However, these traditional methods are no longer common. The artist also highlighted that *khorjins* can be woven either hori-

zontally or vertically, akin to carpet weaving, utilizing either fixed and rotating looms, or a weaving machine. He noted that both the loom and the weaving machine are made of wood. Furthermore, he mentioned other essential tools used in *khorjin* weaving, such as *panjeh* or *daftin* for beating the wefts, and a wooden tool called *pahna*, with a needle on both sides, crucial for preserving the width of the *khorjin* and preventing the edges from curling during weaving.



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