



A palm grove in Bam
markazirss.ir



Dehbakri village
jaazma.com

Hidden marvels of Kerman Province: Bam Citadel to Dehbakri and Jiroft



Bam Citadel
IRNA

Iranica Desk

If you are a fan of wandering, exploring, or simply enjoying natural attractions, then Kerman Province is a destination not to be missed. Described as a region of deserts, and oases, and renowned for tropical products like pistachios and dates, Kerman offers more than meets the eye. Despite recent droughts, the province boasts roaring rivers and experiences all four seasons in a single day, making it a true land of hidden wonders.

Each part of Kerman Province has its unique charm and attractions, making it a diverse and captivating destination. For instance, the southern region of Kerman Province, including cities like Bardsir, Rabar, Baft, Lalehzar, Jiroft, and Kahnuj, as well as the southeast with the historical gem of Bam, offers equally, if not more, enticing attractions compared to the northern provinces.

Following the spring rains this year, nature and the skies in Kerman Province have collaborated to reveal the breathtaking beauty of creation, showcasing a rare spectacle of natural wonders. In the southeast of Kerman Province, the historical city of Bam, with its remarkable landscapes, stands out as a must-see destination that captivates visitors with its beauty and historical significance.

Bam is often remembered by Iranians for the tragic earthquake of 2003. While this sad event remains etched in our memories, it's important to recognize that there is more to Bam than this unfortunate incident. The city boasts stunning date palm groves that spread across its landscape, nourished by flowing aqueducts. These picturesque palm groves, which envelop the southeastern city, serve as a major tourist attraction, whether you choose to ad-

mire them from the heights of the historic citadel or prefer strolling through the city streets on foot.

Despite its location in the Lut Desert, Bam benefits from its strategic position near the mountains of Kerman and the southeastern highlands, which have enabled the creation of ample water resources for this desert valley. This unique positioning also contributes to a moderated climate, ideal for cultivating dates and citrus fruits. Dates and oranges have been prized agricultural products in Iran and globally since ancient times.

In addition to these agricultural treasures, the warm and hospitable nature of the people of Bam, coupled with their skilled straw handicrafts, add to the city's charm. If you are fortunate enough to experience the refreshing scent of spring rain revitalizing the parched desert soil with the aroma of fresh water and earth, the scenes in this

beautiful city may enchant you, allowing you to relish the joy of being in this land once more.

Walking amidst the melody of spring rain under the shade of palm trees, symbolic of life and resilience, is an experience that transcends mere words on paper, offering a profound sense of connection with nature and the spirit of Bam.

The iconic imagery associated with the city of Bam often features a landscape adorned with verdant palm groves, amidst which stands a majestic structure in hues of soil and clay, resembling a gem set in a ring. This structure is none other than the renowned Bam Citadel, recognized as the largest and oldest adobe building globally.

Listed as one of Iran's cultural heritage sites on the UNESCO World Heritage List, the Bam Citadel holds significant historical importance as a key site along the Silk Road. Originating from the Sassanian era, this ar-

chitectural marvel sits atop an artificial hill in the northwest quadrant of the ancient city of Bam.

Positioned at a pivotal juncture of the Silk Road and pathways leading to Central Asia, the Persian Gulf, and Egypt, the Bam Citadel suffered substantial damage, with approximately 80% of its structure ravaged by the 2003 earthquake. However, the silver lining lies in the fact that over half of the citadel has been meticulously reconstructed and is now open to the public for exploration.

While thoughts of Bam may evoke images of warmth, deserts, and palm groves, these elements only scratch the surface of the city's diverse realities. Merely a brief 30-minute journey reveals the striking contrasts of nature within this compact region.

Located 55 kilometers southwest of Bam, a village known as Dehbakri offers a stark departure from Bam's familiar

landscape, save for the shared accent of its residents. Serving as a summer retreat, Dehbakri unveils a glimpse of the enchanting paradise nestled within southeastern Kerman and Iran. Few places worldwide offer the juxtaposition of desert, mountains, forests, and rivers within such a short distance, underscoring Kerman's status as a land of hidden marvels.

Journeying from Dehbakri to Jiroft, the primary agricultural hub of Kerman Province and Iran, unveils a tapestry of natural wonders. Amidst towering mountains, crystal-clear rivers twist through the terrain, painting a picture of serene beauty. Despite challenges such as reduced water flow from the Halil Rud River due to factors like low rainfall, drought, and unchecked dam construction, the allure of this region remains intact for intrepid travelers with a penchant for exploring Iran's diverse geography.

Although the Roman and Sassanid emperors used terms such as "restoration" in their approach to the past, a better description of the process is appropriation and innovation, even in situations where there was a strong and continuous sense of the past. Discourse, either textual or verbal, was certainly a keystone in late antique attempts to shape and make sense of the past, yet the sovereigns translated these discursive claims into more tangible expressions for themselves, their court, and the people.

While oral histories and historical texts kept the memory of the past alive, the Sassanid and Roman sovereigns, actually experienced the past — and their place and identity in the present in relation to it — spatially and practically. In other words, certain spaces, structures, and practices functioned as sites of memory for the two realms; that is, they facilitated a vital and compelling experience of the past.

In interacting with them, the sovereigns could manipulate how their societies experienced the past in the present as well as how future generations might remember the past. Although, from a distance, the Ro-

mans and Sassanids used broadly similar ritual-visual techniques to create appropriate sites of memory, the two realms' conceptions of the past diverged. The Romans had a strong linear sense of history, supported both by pagan Roman historians with their concept of eternal Rome and by Christian authors with their focus on history's eventual goal of Christ's Second Coming.

The Sassanids understood themselves to descend from a venerable line of ancestors, some of whom might be classified as historical whereas others existed in the realm of mythology. The early Sassanids understood the Achaemenids to be the last of the mythical Kayanid dynasty and cultivated their relationship with them as it connected them to the ancient Avestan past and was a useful polemic in chipping away the legitimacy of the Arsacids.

In the late fifth century the Avestan conception of the past gained ascendancy and won legitimacy among eastern Iranian peoples as their empire expanded into Central and South Asia, the Sassanid kings became more interested in foregrounding Avestan aspects of their "history" and elaborated connections between

themselves and the larger mythical history of the eastern Iranian tradition.

At this time the Sassanids began to adopt the names and titles of the mythical Kayanid dynasty, such as Kosrow, supplementing names of Old Persian derivation, such as Ardeshir. However, in the later centuries of the empire, the figure of Ardeshir I again resurfaced as an ideal king, and many deeds and witticisms attributed to him show up in several "mirrors for princes."

The question of whether the Sassanids understood themselves to be the successors of the Achaemenids has been the subject of much debate over the last two decades, and the divergent conclusions from that debate have been brought to recent work on both the Sassanid monarchy and their relationship with Rome. As a result, equally divergent arguments have been advanced about the extent of the Sassanids' and Romans' understanding of their position in history and about the effects of the past on contemporary relations. However, it is just as important to consider the question of the Sassanid's relationship with Achaemenid sites and visual culture.

Roman and Sassanid approaches to the past



Palace of Ardeshir, a Sassanid king, in Firouzabad, Fars Province
HAMED YEGANEH/SHUTTERSTOCK

The above is a lightly edited version of part of a chapter entitled, "The Lure of the Other and the Limits of the Past," from a book entitled, "The Two Eyes of the Earth," written by Matthew P. Vanepa, published by the University of California Press.