

Museums, guardians of education and legacy



Iranica Desk

May 18 marks International Museum Day and the commencement of Cultural Heritage Week in Iran. The International Council of Museums (ICOM) has designated this year's theme as "Museums for Education and Research," a strategic slogan that distinctly outlines the direction and significance of museums for the upcoming months. The emphasis on the educational and research functions of museums stems from their pivotal role as educational hubs. Museums serve as immersive classrooms where history, culture,

art, and even sociology come to life. Acting as societal educators, museums provide insights into our ancestors' ways of life, their interactions with nature and society, and the transformation of art into craftsmanship and industry. Essentially, museums function as silent, enduring universities housing a diverse array of sciences and arts, offering a deeper understanding of their significance and the pivotal role they play in preserving our collective heritage, IRNA wrote. Museums are inherently designed to serve educational and research purposes. Fully comprehending the intricacies of a

museum's works or artifacts often requires a visitor to dedicate a substantial amount of time to their exploration. It is a privilege to be born and reside in a land where tangible and intangible elements, remnants of our rich history and culture, are present in every corner, serving as a legacy for us. This realization should inspire us all to embrace the role of heritage guardians, ensuring the preservation and appreciation of our cultural treasures for generations to come. The Cultural Heritage Week, observed from May 18-24, presents a unique and invaluable chance each year to explore historical

treasures, visit museums, delve into lesser-known works, and reacquaint ourselves with the rich tapestry of history and culture. Our cultural and heritage assets serve as the cornerstone of our identity, both in the present and for generations to come. In the past three years, the government has focused its cultural heritage and museum efforts on enhancing public understanding and appreciation of heritage, strengthening national identity and social cohesion, encouraging community involvement in the preservation and protection of cultural heritage, and empowering local communities to

take ownership of their cultural assets, while also emphasizing the importance of social responsibility in this regard. Museums serve as invaluable repositories of cultural heritage. While preserving and protecting this legacy is a national imperative, with the Ministry of Cultural Heritage playing a pivotal role, a country boasting an abundance of tangible artifacts and vibrant intangible traditions that permeate the social and cultural fabric of its people, recognized globally, requires every individual to assume the role of a heritage custodian. Iran stands as a nation with a pro-

found historical legacy, ranking among the top 10 most culturally advanced countries worldwide. Its heritage traces back over 7,000 years, with a history of human settlement spanning beyond one million years. This country is ranked among the top 10 globally with 27 tangible and natural heritage sites out of 107 worldwide, and in terms of intangible heritage, having registered 24 elements, it previously held the 7th position. In the current government, with a surge in the number of registrations, it has climbed two spots to now hold the 5th position worldwide.

Semnan Province with stunning ecosystems and landscapes attractive for rural tourists

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Rural tourism means travelling to non-urbanized places with low population. An incredible chance to connect with local communities, support them and immerse yourself in their local culture. Rural tourism development has been identified as a significant source of income and a key factor in improving the economy of rural areas. In many countries, revenues from the rural tourism industry have grown more rapidly than revenues from the production, sale, and export of various goods and services. The rural tourism industry leads to the expansion of services, creation of job opportunities, and development of infrastructure in the most remote parts of villages, ultimately contributing to human development. It is crucial to assess the current and potential facilities for rural tourism in Iran and provide solutions for their optimal utilization. The diverse climate found in the villages of Semnan Province has resulted in the creation of stunning ecosystems and landscapes, hosting a wide variety of plant and animal communities. Villages in the northern regions of the province are characterized by lush green lands covered with dense forests that stretch to the Alborz Mountains, while in the south of these mountains, dry lands, deserts, dry rivers, and sparsely vegetated mountains can be observed. These distinct climatic landscapes have fostered a range of plant and animal habitats, setting Semnan apart from many neighboring provinces. This climatic diversity and biodiversity of animal and plant life have the potential to attract recreational and scientific travelers to the province if appropriate measures are

taken. However, despite these great potentials, many of these attractions remain unknown to tourists, both domestic and foreign, and are not effectively utilized. Therefore, the issue of underdevelopment in rural communities remains a primary concern. In Semnan Province, 40 villages have been designated as tourist destinations based on criteria such as climatic diversity, historical significance, natural and cultural attractions, housing quality, environmental features, and geographical distribution. These villages encompass a variety of characteristics that make them appealing to visitors. Over 23% of the province's land area is allocated as protected areas and wildlife sanctuaries, constituting approximately 25% of Iran's total protected areas. The inhabitants of Semnan Province's villages have unique cultural and physical ties with neighboring regions, influencing their way of life and traditions. The customs and rituals observed in the province's villages are shaped by cultural and religious interactions, reflecting a blend of influences. The lifestyle of the villagers in Semnan Province is influenced by their livelihood practices, encompassing both settled and nomadic patterns. Traditional and indigenous architectural styles are prevalent in the selected villages, adding to their charm and authenticity. These villages boast a rich tapestry of customs and traditions that can be leveraged to enhance tourism, including ceremonies like marriage proposals, engagements, weddings, mourning rituals, and more. *Taziye*, a religious ceremony with deep historical roots, local dialect nuances, and symbolic elements, including wom-

en's *taziye* ceremonies unique to the region, can be a draw for tourists during special events. Additionally, showcasing the preparation of traditional bread and sweets in the villages can be a compelling attraction for visitors and a source of employment opportunities within the community. Local games, enjoyed by both men and women of all ages, are cultural treasures that contribute significantly to the tourism potential of the villages. The way these games are played is influenced by the climatic and social conditions of the communities. Developing a comprehensive plan to showcase these traditional games would not only attract tourists but also create job opportunities in the region. Additionally, approximately 50 percent of the villages are situated within protected areas, making them natural attractions that require careful planning to preserve their beauty and biodiversity while also catering to tourists. Many of these villages are home to nomadic populations with distinct lifestyles, livelihoods, cultures, rituals, and traditions that appeal to a wide range of travelers, including culture enthusiasts and social tourists. These unique aspects of village life can be leveraged to enhance the tourism experience and promote sustainable development in the region. One of the major characteristics of tribes that can serve as a general indicator for the development of tourism is their settlements. Considering the changes that have taken place throughout the year in the field of life and livelihood, the nomadic and semi-nomadic settlements have a special focus on the functional differentiation of living spaces.



Padeh village
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