

Restoration of historical monuments

In October 2023, Shahab Talai, CEO of Iran's Fund for the Development and Restoration of Historical Textures, unveiled an enticing incentive. He announced that any individual, company, or institution incurring expenses related to the repair, restoration, or refurbishment of tourist sites could have those costs recognized as tax equivalents. This recognition would be granted with the endorsement of the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and the development

and restoration fund, facilitating a beneficial arrangement for those contributing to the preservation of tourist attractions.

Highlighting the fund's resources and capabilities, he emphasized the ability to offer diverse and tailored support to owners and custodians of historical buildings. He elaborated, "The government extends a range of benefits to those active in this field, one of which comes in the form of tax exemptions."

Insurance for tourist guides

At the 15th gathering of Iranian tourist guides, Mohsen Hajisaeid, vice president of the Iran Federation of Tourist Guide Associations, shed light on several beneficial measures undertaken by the government of president Raisi. He noted that providing insurance to thousands of tourist guides, deploying guides during Nowruz celebrations, facilitating the participation of tourist guides in international events, and

placing tourism guidance signs in tourist hotspots were among the key initiatives of Iran's Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts. He also commended the ministry's efforts in resuscitating tourism post-pandemic, waiving visas for 33 countries, and pushing for the implementation of two-day weekend holidays.

Mehdi Ghasemian, secretary of the Iran Tourist Guide Association, an-

nounced the resumption of tour guide insurance in July 2023. He went on to say that "by linking the tourist guide card to the banking system and setting up direct deposits into this account, it has become possible to put in place a requirement for foreign tourists to purchase tickets through tourist guide cards at major sites like Persepolis, thus making use of the capacity of local guides."

Construction of coastal towns

Mehrdad Bazrpash, Iran's minister of Roads and Urban Development, also recently said, on the sidelines of the signing of the contract to equip and operate the container terminals of Chabahar Port with the Republic of In-

dia: "Turning Iran into a tourism hub is one of the government's goals. By designating several coastal towns — seven of which have been prioritized while work on three towns is already underway — we are moving in that di-

rection." Saeid Ghafouri, the head of the New Towns Development Company, recently announced preparations are underway for the construction of seven towns. He stated, "The new towns of

Tis; Makran Central; a new town in Jask city; the towns of Persian Gulf, Beris, Kooshk, and Shahrak-e Aftab form a collection of settlements that, while offering diverse economic and social roles and functions, aim to introduce

new patterns of urban planning and architecture. These patterns are designed to be appropriate to local and climatic conditions while also taking into account regional and international capabilities."

Big steps of tourism industry under late president

PERSPECTIVE

The previous government wrapped up its nearly three-year-long term with the tragic loss of its president on May 20, but the reverberations of his actions will carry over into multiple areas. President Ebrahim Raisi's government knocked it out of the park in the tourism sector, which this note will focus on.

Big steps of tourism industry

Despite the relentless smear campaign waged by certain foreign media outlets aligned with imperialist powers, and amidst the onslaught of sanctions imposed by the United States and several European countries — all fueling Iranophobia — Raisi's government steadfastly prioritized tourism and attracting foreign visitors. Determined to reveal the true essence of Iran to the world, the late president, along with his cabinet members, worked tirelessly. As a result, the tourism industry not only kept its upward momentum but accelerated, as evidenced by this report.

In line with the Leader's policies on tourism, the government pulled out all the stops. Consequently, figures revealed that Iran's tourism industry raked in \$7.8 billion over the last two years.

The tourism numbers for last year were also crunched and showed a 58% jump in visitors, with 6,382,755 tourists touching down, compared to the Iranian calendar year 1401 (ended March 20, 2023), when a mere 4,230,000 people visited.

According to figures from Ali-Asghar Shalbafian, the Deputy Tourism Minister, foreign investment in the tourism sector has skyrocketed since the previous government took office,

leaping a massive 18 times and hitting \$256 million by the end of the calendar year 1402 (ended March 19, 2024).

The late president's provincial trips were a real boon for local tourism industries. A total of 1,610 tourism projects kicked off across the country since his government took office.

As stated by the deputy minister, a staggering 2,400 tourism projects valued at 400,000 billion Rials (over \$68 million) are currently underway. Of these, 81 projects, accounting for 97,000 billion Rials (over \$167 million) in investment, are over 80% complete.

The government gave the green light to cancel tourist visa requirements for citizens of 33 countries, a strategic move that saw tourist numbers soar to 6,382,000 by the end of last year.

Ezzatollah Zarghami, the minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, maintained that the Islamic Republic has thrown open its doors to the world, rolling out the red carpet for international visitors and offering them

the chance to discover the country's unique attractions firsthand. He further emphasizes the need to counter the barrage of negative advertising, rumors, and Iranophobia propagated by the arrogant powers.

According to Zarghami, the cabinet firmly believed that tourism is the birthright of everyone on the globe, and Iran stands out as one of the most breathtaking countries owing to its unique history, natural wonders, ecotourism, hospitable locals, and health tourism.

Moreover, the Iranian tourism industry experienced a boom in job creation under president Raisi, witnessing a 10.3% spike in employment in 2023 compared to the previous two years. Last year's surge propelled the industry's contribution to the country's total employment to a substantial 6.6%.

What we've covered here only scratches the surface of the previous government's efforts in the realm of tourism. De-

spite facing significant challenges, including the global coronavirus pandemic, which brought worldwide tourism to a grinding halt, and amid strong smear campaigns and Iranophobia, Raisi's government strived to showcase Iran and its myriad attractions to the world.

The late Iranian president Ebrahim Raisi visits the historical neighborhood of Yazd, Iran, on December 17, 2021, to oversee efforts at restoring historical monuments.
● president.ir

