

Nature's resilience in Varamin's tree-lined road



Iranica Desk

The Varamin plain, located in the southeastern part of Tehran Province, sits on the edge of Iran's central desert and is characterized by a hot, dry climate. During the searing summers, temperatures can soar between 40 to 50 degrees Celsius, making survival challenging for all living beings, particularly delicate flora such as trees. Mohammad Reza Tajik, the head of Varamin's Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Department, wrote in a note that the ancient trees dotting the fertile Varamin plain have become a major attraction, drawing

both Iranian and international visitors despite the severe crises of heat and water scarcity they currently face. What has transformed this desert-bordering land into a radiant gem is the tree-lined road leading to a tourist village named Khaveh, situated east of the city of Varamin. Khaveh is recognized for its diverse historical, architectural, religious, and natural attractions, making it a prime destination for tourists. This road, noted as the longest tree-lined avenue in both the Varamin plain and even Tehran Province, features a heavenly

corridor lined with ancient European ash trees (known as *Zabaan Gonjeshk* in Persian). It stretches approximately two kilometers and is home to around 3,000 uniformly planted trees. According to village elders, these trees were planted in 1931 by Hajj Agha Mohammad Masoumi and the local villagers. At that time, with access to qanat water and later motor pump water, many trees were planted by school students, each named after an individual student who pledged to care for their tree for life. They promised to replace any tree that dried out or broke with a new sapling. As the surviving students age, they

still feel compelled to protect the tree-lined road they once nurtured. In recent years, a new road has been constructed alongside the original entrance, serving as an exit, thanks to the efforts of the village council and local residents. The addition of new saplings promises to enhance the beauty of this avenue in the years to come. Currently, this road is among the most significant historical, natural, and rural attractions in Varamin and Khaveh village. The presence of a traditional water mill nearby has made it a popular filming location for various cinematic and television

productions, attracting countless domestic and international tourists each year. A unique feature of this tree-lined road, unlike any other in Varamin's social and agricultural history, is the community practice of agricultural water vows. Since the trees were planted, channels and ditches have been constructed on both sides of the road, allowing farmers to willingly share water from their agricultural fields. This collaboration ensures that the thirsty trees receive the necessary hydration while contributing to the area's ecological restoration. The annual celebration of Sızdah Bedar (Day of Nature) in

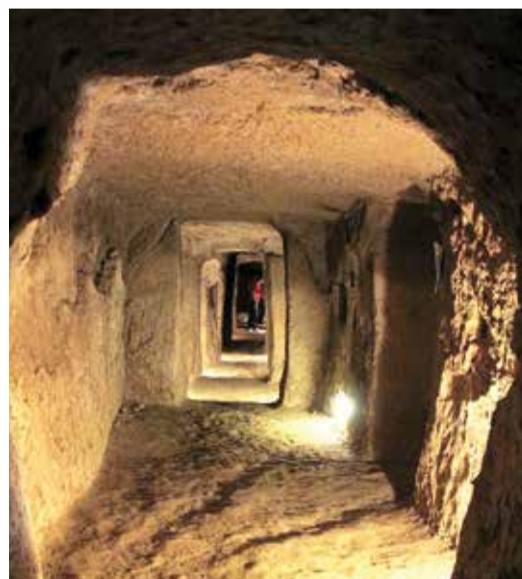
April showcases the road's significance. On this day, urban residents and villagers gather along its edges, setting up camps, performing traditional music, and preparing local dishes such as local *aash* (a thick soup) and fire-brewed tea. Celebrations continue until sunset, filled with local games and festivities that honor this cherished occasion. It is hoped that registering this natural attraction on Iran's National Heritage List through the Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Ministry will position Varamin as one of the leaders in preserving the county's historical and cultural identity.

Hand-carved architecture of Nushabad Underground City is astonishing

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It may seem fanciful to think that one of the capitals of the Sassanid Empire has remained untouched, yet an underground city was discovered in Isfahan Province about 20 years ago, and it has now become one of its most astonishing attractions. The Nushabad is regarded as one of the largest underground cities and the largest hand-carved architectural works in the world. This is why flights to Kashan and travel to this ancient land are popular among foreign tourists. If you want to wander through the intricate narrow tunnels of this uninhabited underground city and embark on an unparalleled adventure, head to the region. Discovered accidentally in 2004, the Nushabad Underground City has since become one of the region's most astonishing attractions. The ancient area, which is considered one of the largest hand-carved structures in the world, is located about seven kilometers north of Kashan and has been settled beneath the current fabric of Nushabad city for over 1,500 years. Previously, Kashan's historical significance was known through the ancient hills of Sialk and the inscriptions on the minarets of its mosques. However, since the entrance to its underground world was discovered, visitors from around the globe have come to witness the remarkable craftsmanship of its past inhabitants. Nushabad was one of the capitals of the Sassanids during the reign of Anushirvan and served as a refuge for people during the Mongol invasions, although floods have destroyed many parts of the city. The underground city was discovered by a person digging a well at home, and two years later, it was registered on Iran's National Heritage List.

The hand-carved architecture of the Nushabad Underground City is astonishing in its uniqueness, attracting enthusiasts, historians, and archaeologists alike. Experts believe that the hard soil composition in this region likely necessitated the use of diamond-tipped tools for excavation. When you witness the vastness of the Nushabad Underground City, which was even larger in the past, it becomes clear why this architecture is considered unparalleled. The robust structures of the underground city extend both vertically and horizontally. These dense and expansive networks consist of intricate tunnels, rooms, wells, and numerous channels arranged across three levels, with depths ranging from 4 to 16 meters. However, the entrance to the city is below human height, requiring visitors to bend down while traversing the narrow one-person tunnels to reach the interior sections. The first level features tunnels designed to mislead enemies, while the second and third levels served as living quarters, food storage, and shelters for the inhabitants. The artifacts discovered in the Nushabad Underground City indicate that people made significant use of this underground shelter during the Mongol and Timurid invasions. While the underground city does not maintain particularly cool air, it can be visited year-round, regardless of weather conditions. Generally, the three spring months and the autumn season are considered the best times to explore its attractions, as visitors can escape both the scorching summer heat and the biting winter cold. Additionally, in May, a traditional rosewater extraction festival takes place, but during this period, you may encounter crowds and large gatherings of people.



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