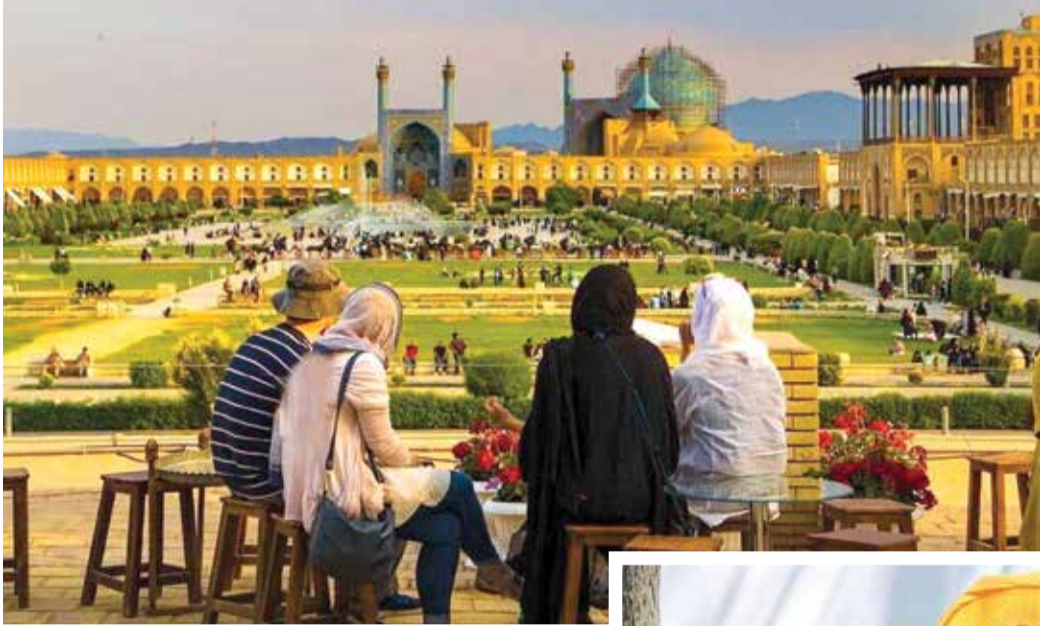


Role of family travel in community development



Iranica Desk

One of the most unforgettable experiences is family travel; it's an adventure filled with conversations, paths traversed, sights admired, souvenirs collected, and new friends and attractions discovered. It also embodies the assurance we share, allowing us to navigate the sweetness, fatigue, and patience of the journey together, supporting one another. Regarding the significance of family travel, Mehran Hassani, a tourism researcher, believes these trips not only strengthen emotional and social bonds but also play a crucial role in the economic, social, and cultural development of Iranian society. With effective planning and investment, such journeys can significantly contribute to achieving sustainable development goals and improving the quality of life for Iranians, chtn.ir wrote. He noted that in Iranian

society, families, as primary consumer groups while traveling, enhance local community income by purchasing handicrafts, staying in hotels, dining at local eateries, and more. Furthermore, such trips encourage domestic tourism, as families opt to explore various regions of Iran rather than traveling abroad, which positively impacts the preservation of financial resources within the country. Hassani, a member of the Association of Tourism Experts, regards the social dimension of family trip as an opportunity for deeper interaction among relatives, allowing for more conversation, recreation, and group activities. During these excursions, individuals can create unique shared experiences while exploring natural, historical, and cultural sites, leading to stronger bonds. Additionally, research indicates that communal ac-

tivities during travels help lower psychological stress and enhance the overall quality of life for family members. He emphasized the importance of fostering connections between families on these journeys, noting that such interactions can strengthen unity and cohesion within the community. Organizing the tourism events and festivals, where different households can

exchange experiences, further promotes social solidarity. Hassani also highlighted the cultural value of family travel, pointing out that it enables parents to introduce their children to the diverse customs and traditions of various regions. This exposure not only educates the younger generation about Iranian history and art but also reinforces their cultural identity

through these enriching encounters. He continued that another benefit of such group trips is that families gain insight into environmental challenges, cultural heritage, handicrafts, and related issues. By raising awareness, they can take essential steps to protect these resources. Hassani emphasized that notable challenges and opportunities exist for en-

acting meaningful change in family travel. To achieve these goals, it is important to design tours with a "multigenerational" approach, catering to the needs of all members, from children to seniors. Such programs can offer diverse activities, including engaging entertainment for kids, educational experiences for teenagers, and uplifting, calming activities for older adults. He also noted that these tours could be thematic, featuring artistic itineraries that include visits to creative handicraft workshops and explorations of both tangible and intangible cultural heritage, as well as health and nature therapy excursions with stays in natural settings aimed at enhancing mental well-being. Referring to the main features of family travel packages, he noted their variety and affordability, which enhance satisfaction and encourage family partici-

pation in domestic trips. He proposed the development of a family tourism application that could offer information on suitable routes, family-friendly accommodations, attractions designed for families, and special tour recommendations. Users would be able to share their travel experiences and gain insights from others. Additionally, with the widespread use of technology and high internet access, families can save on both travel costs and time. Hassani also highlighted the role of media in producing documentary, narrative, and educational content, such as clips, visual reports, series, and short films. He asserted that these artistic formats, focusing on family-friendly destinations and their benefits, would likely be well-received due to the country's strong household culture, acting as a catalyst for promoting a family-oriented travel ethos.

Splendor of Shokat Abad Garden in Birjand

Shokat Abad Garden, a celebrated example of Persian gardens, was commissioned by Ismail Khan Shokat ol-Molk from the Alam family, located near Birjand in South Khorasan Province. Persian gardens are hallmark features of Iranian desert cities, showcasing the ingenuity and historical technology of Iran in transforming arid landscapes into vibrant oasis-like retreats.

Shokat Abad is an expansive garden that not only features ornamental plants but also includes an array of fruit trees. Following the traditional layout of Persian gardens, it incorporates a *kushk* (pavilion) at its center, which dates back to the Qajar dynasty. The pavilion boasts a striking white facade and a spacious terrace supported by two elegant pillars adorned with arches. Decorative Goldani motifs enhance its aesthetic appeal, with multiple rooms constructed around and behind this



terrace, enriching the overall design. In terms of structure and architecture, Shokat Abad is truly remarkable. The landscaping and construction adhere to a meticulously prepared plan, resulting in a harmonious design. The *howz khaneh* — a summer room typically designed in an octagonal shape — features the most intricate decorations. A prominent vault, covered by a *kolah farangi* (a dome resembling a foreign headdress), elegantly

crowns the *howz khaneh*, adding to the architectural splendor. The garden employs various types of vaulting, including barrel vaults in some rooms, which are particularly well-suited for the hot, dry climate of South Khorasan. Interestingly, certain sections of the garden appear newer, indicating later additions made to accommodate the evolving needs of its residents over time. The owner's private quarters, known as *andaruni*, are lo-

cated on the southern side of the complex, resembling traditional houses with stucco frames and blind arches surrounding the pools. Fruit trees serve as a defining feature of Shokat Abad, providing both yield and decorative charm throughout the garden. Situated five kilometers east of Birjand in Shokat Abad village, the garden can be easily accessed by asking for directions to Birjand University, which is located directly across from it. The complex was

registered as a national heritage site of Iran on August 14, 1999, highlighting its cultural significance.

About Birjand

Birjand itself is a city rich in history and culture, offering several attractions to explore. One significant landmark is the Birjand Citadel, a historic fortress that dates back to the Safavid era. Its impressive architecture and strategic design provide visitors with a glimpse into the military history of the region, while

the citadel's vantage point offers panoramic views of the surrounding landscape, enriching the visitor experience.

South Khorasan Province

South Khorasan Province is renowned for its stunning natural landscapes, which encompass mountains, deserts, and lush valleys. The province is characterized by a unique climate that varies from hot and dry in the lower elevations to temperate in the high-

er altitudes. This climatic diversity fosters a rich variety of flora and fauna, as well as agricultural products, particularly saffron, which stands out as one of the region's most famous exports.

Rich in history, the province hosts numerous historical sites, ancient caravansaries, and traditional bazaars that reflect its vibrant cultural heritage. Its strategic location on the Silk Road historically transformed it into a crucial hub for trade and cultural exchange between east and west, further enhancing its significance.

Overall, South Khorasan Province offers a rich tapestry of cultural and natural attractions, making it a rewarding destination for travelers seeking to experience the profound depth of Iran's heritage. With sites like Shokat Abad Garden at its heart, the province invites exploration and appreciation of its historical and natural richness.