

Arvand Free Zone's unique appeal for tourists



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Iranica Desk

The managing director of the Arvand Free Zone Organization described the development of tourism projects as a key economic goal for the region and expressed readiness to attract foreign tourists in collaboration with both domestic and international investors, emphasizing the area's exceptional potential.

Ali Zarei stated, "In the Arvand Free Zone, which encompasses the cities of Abadan and Khorramshahr, we regard tourism as an industry. Therefore, we have integrated the development of tourism projects into the economic objectives of the free zone, as tourism not only generates economic benefits but also shares local culture with visitors."

He added that the Arvand Free Zone possesses significant potential for attracting foreign tourists and is equipped with essential infrastructure for air, water, rail, and road transportation. This capability has positioned Abadan and Khorramshahr among special cities, *chtn.ir* wrote. Zarei noted the strategic advantage of Abadan and Khorramshahr's proximity to Iraq and their water connection with the Persian Gulf, calling it an excellent opportunity for tourism development and foreign tourist attraction. He emphasized the importance of leveraging this opportunity to introduce Iran and combat anti-Iran sentiment, stating, "Abadan and Khorramshahr host some of the oldest oil and petrochemical industries in the country and are linked to several pioneering developments in Iran's modern history."

He further highlighted that this region has welcomed people from various countries for approximately 70 years. Citizens from India, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Pakistan, England, Scotland, the United States, Japan, South Korea, and others have traveled to or settled in this area due to its significant oil and petrochemical industry since the late 12th century to the mid-13th century in the Iranian calendar.

Zarei pointed out that the Arvand Free Zone hosts the largest population among all free zones in the country, stating, "Almost half of the inhabitants of Iran's free zones reside within the Arvand Free Zone. This demographic is crucial for the tourism industry." He noted that the ethnic diversity of the Arvand residents is another social advantage, aptly referring to the area as "a small Iran."

He regarded the Tehran tourism exhibition as a valuable opportunity to showcase recent initiatives, stating, "The 18th Tehran International Tourism and Related Industries Exhibition, held from Feb.11-14, was an excellent platform to present the measures implemented for providing services to health and pilgrimage tourists, as well as the facilities offered to tourism companies and accommodation establishments. The exhibition was a highly educational and practical experience, allowing attendees to gain valuable insights that can be leveraged to effectively promote tourism."

Zarei emphasized that achieving the slogan "Tourism, Peace, and National Cohesion" requires collaborative efforts from multiple sectors, stating, "We cannot expect the public sector to achieve this alone; the community sector must also align with this vision. The presence of various Iranian ethnic groups in Abadan, which have shaped the culture of being 'Abadani,' exemplifies how tourism can promote peace and national cohesion."

"Today, the Arvand Free Zone is more prepared than ever for extensive cooperation with domestic and foreign investors. Our goal is to create a sustainable ecosystem in the tourism sector that will not only contribute to the economic development of the region but also enhance the quality of life for its residents and improve the health and medical industry both nationally and beyond," he concluded.

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Tracing footsteps of history in Chardavol of Ilam Province

Iranica Desk

Archaeological studies and cultural evidence indicate that humans inhabited Chardavol in Ilam Province during the prehistoric period, according to a faculty member of the Islamic Azad University of Ilam. Habibollah Mahmoudian told ISNA that Chardavol is situated in the northeastern mountainous region of Ilam Province, characterized by relatively high mountains such as Qalajeh and Khormeh in the north-east, as well as Bankol Mountain, whose peak, Manesht, rises over 3,000 meters above sea level, forming the western heights of the area. Chardavol has had settlements since ancient times, influenced by these geographical conditions, and numerous remains from various historical periods can be found in the region.

Khormeh Mountain, and several kilometers of its wall, along with numerous remains found in the Zanjireh and Shabab regions.

He added that historical documents reveal Chardavol's importance during the historical period, owing to its strategic position on the Shahi Road (the ancient highway) that connected Persepolis and Shush to the western Zagros Mountain regions and present-day northern Iraq, extending to Sardis, the capital of the Lydian Empire, as well as its connections to the cities of Seymareh, Sirvan, and present-day Ilam.

The faculty member stated that, from one perspective, the Khavaran Road — connecting Central Asia and the central plateau of Iran to Mesopotamia and the regions of North Africa — extended from the western areas of this county.



● ilamtoday.com

He emphasized that the presence of numerous caves and rock shelters on the slopes and heights, including the prehistoric Holeylan and Zardalan caves, archaeological sites, and cliff shelters along the historical Seymareh River, along with dozens of ancient sites and mounds throughout the county, underscores the archaeological significance of the area in the western Zagros.

The historical events of Chardavol during the early Islamic centuries are also intertwined with the histories of other regions in the province.

Today, Chardavol is recognized as one of the cities in Ilam Province, holding a significant position in terms of history, economy, and tourism.

Ilam Province itself has a rich and diverse history, influenced by vari-



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The faculty member further explained that remnants from settled locations, including ancient mounds, cemeteries, and historical buildings, indicate that the intermountain plains of Chardavol, Aseman Abad, Holeylan, and the banks of the Seymareh River have been inhabited from the Bronze Age and Iron Age through historical times.

Mahmoudian elaborated that the area's favorable geographical conditions — particularly its water resources, forest and pasture coverage, and other natural benefits — have ensured the continuity of settlement. Numerous ancient sites and historical buildings remain in this region, highlighting its rich historical depth.

The archaeologist noted significant features of the area, such as the ancient bridge in Bijnavand village,

ous civilizations over the centuries. It has been home to numerous ethnic groups, each contributing to the cultural tapestry of the region. The province is characterized by its unique geographical features, including mountains, valleys, and rivers, which have played a crucial role in shaping its historical development.

Throughout history, Ilam has served as a crossroads for trade and cultural exchange, linking the Iranian plateau with neighboring regions. Its archaeological sites, ancient ruins, and historical landmarks attract researchers and tourists alike, offering insights into the rich heritage of the area. The province's natural beauty, combined with its historical significance, makes it an important destination for those interested in exploring Iran's past and present.