

Vali Castle; the confluence of artistry and heritage

Iranica Desk *In the heart of the mountainous plain of Ilam, atop a hill, stands a robust structure from the Qajar era — the Vali Castle. This prominent edifice, a relic of history and a testament to the authentic architecture of Iran, harbors stories and secrets that remain hidden within the impressive silence of its walls. Once, nearly a century ago, this castle served as a refuge for the governor and a secure base in the backwoods of Ilam. Today, it shines like a brilliant jewel at the heart of Ilam, where hundreds of tourists seek solace beneath the shade of its ancient trees. The Vali Castle is not merely a reminder of the past but also a vibrant tableau of art and civilization. From the intricate designs adorning the plastered walls of the royal chamber to the fountain-spouting pools in the central courtyard, each element quietly whispers sweet tales of history.*



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Architectural mastery

This architectural masterpiece embodies not only the delicacy of artistry and craftsmanship from that era but also signifies the cultural and social grandeur of the people of this land, gleaming like a precious gem in the annals of Ilam's history. Over time, the edifice — once a bastion of power, art, and life — has evolved into a sanctuary for its people's culture and a reservoir of social heritage, safeguarding a rich collection of customs, traditions, and the lives of Ilam's past inhabitants. Every time tourists step into this castle, they walk through the heart of Qajar history, reconnecting with their Iranian identity through the display of the culture of this land. The Vali Castle tells a story to be heard, presents a landscape to be seen, and evokes tranquility to be felt. Its grandeur lies not only in its stones and bricks but also in the rich history and deep essence of its people. This enduring tale unfolds with each season, enchanting every listener. Crafted in 1908, this magnificent building is a testament to Iranian architecture harmoniously nestled amidst nature. Within its stony walls lie countless stories of the region's ups and downs. The clear water of the Bibi Spring, which once infused life into the central courtyard, showcased the ingenuity and advancement of its people through the use of clay pipes. This irrigation system stands as a symbol of harmony between nature and humanity, transforming the castle from a mere residence into a haven of comfort and serene living. The Vali Castle has now become one of Iran's most significant national monuments, earning a place on the country's national heritage list in 1997. It majestically stands on the northern side of Pasdaran Street, showcasing its restored grandeur and reconstructed facade. Today, the Anthropological Museum of Ilam resides within the heart of the castle, with each corner narrating the culture, art, and traditions of the people from this land. Amid the bustle of today's city, Vali Castle resonates with the proud echoes of the past, inviting everyone to pause for a moment and reflect on history and authenticity; it embodies not just a lasting structure but also an eternal spirit in Ilam's history.

Creation of Vali Castle

The Hosseinabad neighborhood, later known as "Deh Bala," was the retreat of Gholamreza Khan during hot summer days. He chose this pleasant location to build the castle, entrusting its construction to two skilled architects, Haj Darvish Ali Kermanshahi and Reza Gholi. The castle's formidable towers and walls, intricate plasterwork, lush gardens, and bathhouse reflect the ingenuity and creative artistry of its builders. Standing tall in history, Vali Castle is magnificent and imposing, resembling a beautiful painting on a canvas that seamlessly connects the past with the present. Spanning an area of 4,687 square meters, it takes on a trapezoidal shape

in the heart of the mountainous plains, showcasing authentic Iranian art in every corner. On the southern side of the castle, a vast green space covering 1,792 square meters has been developed, which, in conjunction with the castle's architecture, creates a captivating display. Originally built in an open area, this castle has gradually been surrounded by residential and administrative buildings due to urban development over time. To the north, a narrow alley borders the castle, while to the west a busy street and to the east a government office encompass the structure. Pasdaran Street to the south serves as the main access route to the castle.

Shahneshin Hall

Within this structure lies a hall known as the shahneshin, located on the northern side, which exhibits a grandeur surpassing that of the other parts of the building. At the center of this hall, there is a small pool that, in times past, was adorned with marble stones and filled with clear water from a plentiful spring; however, over time, as the spring dried up, it lost its symbolic significance.

portals, connecting history to the present. The turquoise railings shine like ornaments on the southern terrace, and the porticoes filled with intricate designs have transformed this structure into a masterpiece worthy of admiration. As an example of Qajar architecture, Vali Castle stands as a steadfast monument to history, symbolizing the harmonious coexistence of nature and art. It continues to narrate a glorious past while preserving a lasting identity in the heart of the city of Ilam.

Restoration

The Vali Castle, which once shone in the heart of the vast plains of Pashkau, suffered deep wounds during the storm of the Iran-Iraq War. Half of the glory and grandeur of this structure was claimed by the flames of war, leaving scars of destruction and oblivion in every corner. However, the love for cultural heritage and the determination to restore this historical monument to its former glory revived this castle. In 1988, thanks to the efforts of the Cultural Heritage Organization, restoration work commenced, and after two years of relentless effort,



During the restoration, the skill and artistic sensibility of the restorers revitalized this section, infusing it with symbolic beauty and modern plumbing to help it preserve the charm of the past. But the beauty of Vali Castle does not end here. When gazing at the southern facade, the covered terraces, adorned with latticed windows and colored glass, captivate the eyes of every viewer. The sturdy circular columns and ornate capitals showcase the craftsmanship of the masters of that era, while the arched designs and decorative woodwork embellished with colorful tiles narrate a tale of everlasting authenticity. The tall trees and ancient pines that embrace the rectangular pond in the courtyard reflect a beautiful bond between architecture and nature. The bright and colorful windows of the castle serve as

in 1990, this valuable edifice was reintegrated into the cultural fabric of Ilam. In the restoration process, an unwavering priority was given to the authentic style of Iranian architecture and the integrity of the arches and vaults. The ceilings of the rooms were constructed using traditional materials like plaster and brick, while the arches, which served both as load-bearing and decorative elements, were crafted with precise patterns throughout the building. The restoration of Vali Castle was more than just the revival of a historical structure; it was the revitalization of a heritage spirit within the heart of Ilam's culture. Today, every step taken within this building narrates a harmonious blend of history, art, and architectural genius that comes to life before the eyes of visitors.

