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Nowruz tourism booms in Iran

Over 35m hit roads, 4.8m visit historical sites

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Nowruz holidays have once again proven to be a magnet for domestic and international travelers, with millions flocking to the country's historical and cultural sites. During the two-week holiday, spanning March 19 to April 3, over 4.8 million visits were made to cultural and historical attractions managed by the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, IRNA reported.

Iconic destinations such as Persepolis, Hafezieh, and Saadieh topped the charts, drawing in hundreds of thousands of visitors. "Persepolis alone pulled in nearly half a million visitors," officials noted, adding that the site hosted 18,257 tourists on April 3 alone.

The surge in tourism was not limited to Shiraz's landmarks. Other popular sites like Pasargadae, Arg-e Karim Khan, and Fin Garden also saw substantial foot traffic. "This year's turnout has really hit it out of the park," a ministry spokesperson said, emphasizing the growing appeal of Iran's historical treasures.

Beyond cultural sites, the Nowruz season witnessed a broader travel boom across the country. Minister of Cultural Heritage Reza Salehi Amiri highlighted that approximately 40% of Iran's population embarked on trips during this period. "Over 35 million people hit the road," he stated in a televised inter-

view, pointing to a 2.2% increase compared to last year.

Salehi-Amiri attributed this uptick to improved infrastructure and coordinated efforts by government agencies. "We pulled out all the stops this year," he said, praising the contributions of 28 organizations involved in travel services.

The minister also underscored the role of tourism in countering negative perceptions about Iran abroad: "We're turning the tide on Iranophobia through cultural diplomacy." Despite the celebratory mood, Salehi-Amiri acknowledged that there is still room for improvement. "We're not out of the woods yet when it comes to bureaucratic hurdles," he said, calling for streamlined processes to attract foreign investment in tourism.

He also stressed the importance of enhancing infrastructure to ensure a seamless travel experience for both domestic and international tourists.

The minister further revealed that over seven million foreign tourists visited Iran last year—a figure he hopes will climb higher with ongoing efforts to bolster safety and accessibility. "It's not just about rolling out the red carpet; we need to address every bottleneck," he said.

In Ilam Province, tourism also flourished during Nowruz holidays with remarkable growth. The Director-General of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts in Ilam announced a 27.8% increase in visitor arriv-



als during this period and added that Ilam ranked as the top province in terms of tourism growth nationwide.

Farzad Sharifi said that from March 13 to April 3, over 265,000 people stayed in offi-

cial accommodations such as guesthouses, eco-lodges, and hotels across Ilam Province. Additionally, from March 15 until the end of Nowruz holidays, 640 tourism tours from various parts of Iran visited Ilam and ex-

plored its attractions.

Sharifi said that over 12,000 visits were recorded at historical, natural, religious sites, museums, and Nowruz celebrations in Ilam during this time frame.

'No to Accidents' campaign posts 8.5% drop in Nowruz traffic fatalities



Social Desk

Iran's national campaign, "No to Accidents," has been credited with an 8.5% reduction in road traffic fatalities during the Nowruz holiday period compared to last year, according to a spokesperson for the initiative.

The campaign, which ran from March 15 to April 4, aimed to raise public awareness and encourage safer driving practices, IRNA reported.

Alireza Raisi, Deputy Minister of Health and spokesperson for the campaign, added "This year, 828 of our fellow citizens lost their lives in traffic accidents during Nowruz. While this number is still tragic,

it represents a significant step forward," he said, noting that the campaign has been a "game-changer" in addressing road safety. Breaking down the data, Raisi noted that 615 fatalities occurred at the scene of accidents, with 549 on highways and 66 in urban areas.

An additional 213 individuals succumbed to their injuries after being transported to medical facilities. "These figures underscore the urgent need to zero in on key factors like vehicle quality, road safety, human error, and legal reforms," he emphasized.

The campaign also showed the staggering number of injuries sustained in road incidents. Over 85,000 people were injured

during the holiday period, with more than 20,000 requiring intensive care due to severe injuries. Raisi called this a "wake-up call" for authorities and citizens alike.

The "No to Accidents" initiative was launched to draw attention to the annual toll of nearly 20,000 road deaths in Iran. "We're not out of the woods yet," Raisi admitted. "But this campaign has proven that by working together and addressing root causes head-on, we can turn things around."

As authorities double down on efforts to improve road safety, Raisi urged both policymakers and drivers to stay committed. "This is not just about numbers; it's about saving lives," he concluded.

Iranian films to be screened at Istanbul Film Festival

Arts & Culture Desk

The 44th Istanbul Film Festival will roll out the red carpet for a diverse lineup of Iranian films, showcasing the breadth and depth of Iranian cinema.

Running from April 11 to April 22, the festival will feature a mix of feature films, documentaries, and short films that promise to captivate audiences and spark conversations, ILNA reported.

One of the standout entries in the main competition is 'The Crowd', directed by Sahand Kabiri, which represents Iran in its bid for the Golden Tulip award. Joining it in the same category is 'The Things You Kill', an international co-production directed by Alireza Khatami, involving Turkey, France, Poland, and Canada.

The festival will also shine a spotlight on several compelling documentaries and short films. Hesam Eslami's short film 'Citizen-Inmate' delves into themes



of surveillance and control through an innovative docufictional lens. The film has already turned heads internationally with its bold narrative style.

Meanwhile, 'The Volunteer', directed by Gelareh Kiazand and Monir Armstrong (a Canada-Turkey production), and 'Istanbul Mood', co-directed by Nafiseh Motlagh and Saeed Nasiri (a Turkish production), add further depth to the festival's offerings.

Iran, Afghanistan team up to tackle environmental challenges

Social Desk

Iran has stepped up efforts to collaborate with Afghanistan on environmental issues, shifting focus from water rights disputes to broader ecological challenges.

In a recent visit to Afghanistan, Iranian officials proposed joint initiatives to restore the Hamoun Wetland and combat severe dust storms, which have devastating effects on both countries, IRNA reported.

"We suggested starting a joint project on environmental issues, such as reviving the Hamoun Wetland and tackling dust storms, which have severe impacts on people in both countries," said Sediqueh Torabi, an official with Iran's Department of Environment.

"This approach can pave the way for reviving the Hamoun Wetland and

managing the drought crisis in a way that benefits all residents around it, whether Iranian or Afghanistani."

The Hamoun Wetland, once a thriving ecosystem, has faced severe desiccation due to reduced water flow from the Helmand River, largely caused by Afghan dam projects. This has led to increased dust storms, affecting agricultural productivity and forcing migration in both Iran and Afghanistan.

Iran has emphasized the importance of regional cooperation to address these transboundary environmental challenges.

"Issues like dust storms are crucial for advancing environmental diplomacy with neighboring countries," Torabi noted. Iran has also participated in regional workshops, including a meeting in Qatar, where countries shared strategies to com-



bat dust storms.

The collaboration aims to leverage international support and technology to enhance environmental monitoring and mitigation efforts. Iran has signed agreements with international organizations to secure equipment for air pollution monitoring, aiming to improve data accuracy and develop effective solutions.