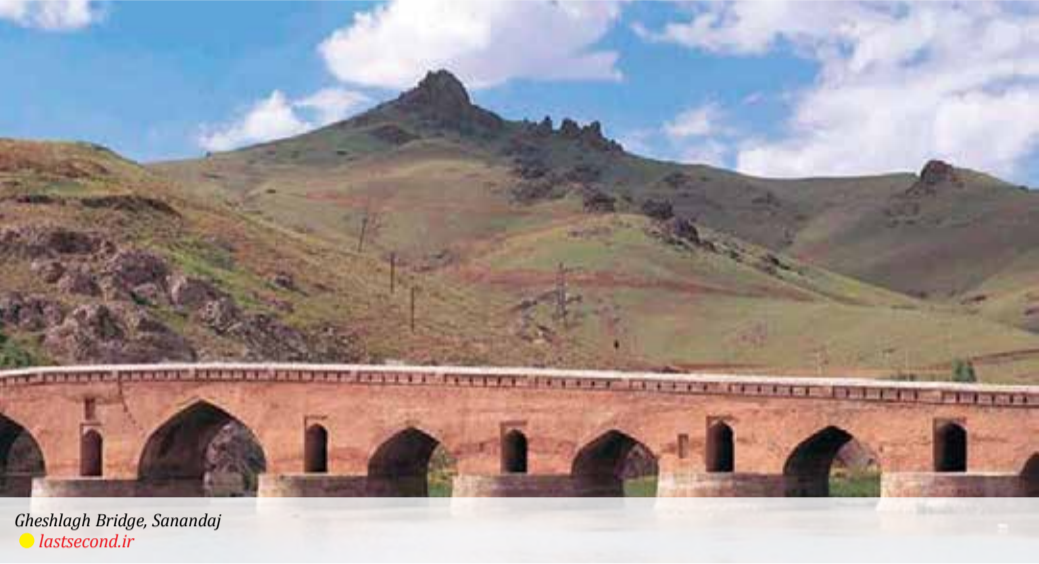


# Kurdistan Province; a booming tourist destination in Nowruz



Iranica Desk

Kurdistan Province of Iran, with its diverse natural, historical, and cultural attractions, as well as the unparalleled hospitality of its people, has emerged as one of the primary tourist destinations during the Nowruz (Iranian New Year) holidays. The Bashmaq border, a key land passage between Iran and the Iraqi Kurdistan region, has become one of the busiest routes for foreign tourists — especially from Iraq — due to its geographical proximity, shared lin-

guistic and cultural traits, and enhanced border services. Many travelers see the Nowruz holidays as a perfect opportunity to visit Iran, choosing Kurdistan for its varied attractions and warm culture, chn.ir wrote. This year, the enhancement of welfare services, the facilitation of travel processes, improved security conditions, and the preparation of reception infrastructure at the Bashmaq border have provided a comfortable and safe experience for travelers, contributing significantly to the increase in tourist arrivals.

From March 16 to April 2, 2025, a total of 41,807 foreign travelers and tourists entered the province through the international Bashmaq border, marking a 50% increase compared to the same period last year. This notable growth has underscored the importance of this border in the region's tourism development. In addition to the influx of travelers, Nowruz celebrations, local rituals, and cultural programs were hosted in various cities throughout the province, adding a joyful and vibrant energy to the re-

gion's social fabric. The surge in tourist numbers directly impacts the province's economic prosperity; accommodation and hospitality centers, transportation services, local markets, and handicraft sales have all benefited from this growth. Foreign tourists, in particular, have shown great enthusiasm for local products and handicrafts, significantly contributing to job creation and strengthening the local economy. These successes can be attributed to years of targeted planning, investment in tourism infrastructure, improve-

ments in border services, and the ongoing efforts of executive bodies, private sector stakeholders, and effective collaboration among travel task force members. Recent actions — including the expansion of tourism advertising, support for cultural events, and the enhancement of access routes — have positioned Kurdistan as a safe, beautiful, and culturally rich destination. Nowruz 1404 (2025) has marked a turning point in these efforts and has painted a bright future for the tourism landscape in this province.



## Journey through Mayamey and its historic caravanserais

Iranica Desk

Travel and tourism along historical routes have left behind diverse legacies throughout history. One of the most significant yet straightforward of these legacies is the establishment of buildings designed for comfort and safety against the dangers of travel, often constructed in challenging terrains and hot, arid regions. Iranians were pioneers in creating such structures, which later came to be known as caravanserais. The etymology of the term “caravanserai” indicates that its original concept is deeply rooted in trade and commerce — a place where caravanners gathered to trade and to seek refuge from bandits and natural obstacles. The history of caravanserais reveals that their emergence was closely linked to interactions between different peoples and nations. During the Achaemenid, Parthian, Mongol, Seljuk, Ot-

toman, and Safavid periods, as trade and commerce flourished within their respective political geographies, caravanserais thrived and evolved. A commonly accepted definition of caravanserais among experts is that they were large structures located either outside or within cities, primarily used by caravanners for commercial purposes, but later adapted for military, political, religious, and social functions. The legacy of caravanserais in Iran not only reflects the ancient history and culture of this land but also serves as a vital attraction for tourists and enthusiasts of history and architecture. In today's world, the attention given to these historic buildings and their revitalization can significantly enhance Iran's profile as a cultural and historical tourist destination, thereby aiding in the preservation of the region's identity and history.

Historical significance of Mayamey

Mayamey, located in Semnan Province, sits at the heart of Iran's rich history and culture, particularly recognized for its caravanserais, which stretch from ancient times to the present day. This city, positioned along the vital route connecting Tehran to Mashhad, has witnessed the flourishing and expansion of a network of caravanserais, each serving as a testament to the tumultuous history of the region. These structures are not only symbols of Iranian architecture but also fulfill essential roles as rest areas for caravanners and as facilitators of trade along lengthy routes. Mayamey has consistently attracted attention due to its impressive collection of caravanserais. This introduction will delve into the history and importance of these historical structures along the Silk Road and their integral role in the economic and cultural development of the region. Mayamey, the easternmost city of Semnan Province, lies directly along the route from Tehran to Mashhad. Bordered to the north by Golestan and North Khorasan

provinces, to the east by Khorasan Razavi Province, and to the west by Shahrud, its strategic position along the Tehran-Mashhad corridor has been recognized for its transit and connectivity significance since ancient times.

Miyandasht Caravanserai

Continuing towards Mashhad, 40 kilometers east of Mayamey, on the route from Mayamey to Mashhad, one finds the Miyandasht Caravanserais. This complex is considered the largest caravanserai complex in Iran, encompassing three caravanserais, three cisterns, a pigeon house, a postal station, and the historical Miyandasht village. The western caravanserai dates back to the Safavid era, while the other two belong to the Qajar period, showcasing the architectural evolution through the ages.

Abbasabad Caravanserai

Located 80 kilometers from the center of Mayamey, the historic and attractive village of Abbasabad is home to the Abbasabad Caravanserai. As the largest standalone cara-

vanserai in the city, it is nestled within the historical and terraced layout of Abbasabad village and represents one of the village's most significant attractions. Constructed during the Safavid era, the Abbasabad Caravanserai underwent substantial renovations during the Qajar period, enhancing its historical importance.

Jahanabad Caravanserai

Situated 60 kilometers northeast of Mayamey is the small and remote Jahanabad village, which contains a historical caravanserai believed to belong to the Ilkhanate period. The Ilkhanids strategically constructed large and aesthetically pleasing caravanserais for the convenience of travelers along routes and roads, with designs tailored to the climate of each region.

Guardians of history and identity

In conclusion, caravanserais are

not merely artifacts of Iran's historical and cultural heritage; they also symbolize the human connections and cultural exchanges among various ethnic groups throughout history. These structures have evolved into sanctuaries for travelers, merchants, and passersby, serving as living evidence of Iranian art and architecture across different eras and reminding us of how our history has been shaped along major roads and pathways. Mayamey, with its impressive collection of historical caravanserais, presents unique opportunities for cultural revival and helps position Iran as a prominent destination for cultural and historical tourism. Consequently, the preservation and restoration of these buildings not only enrich historical and cultural knowledge but can also play a crucial role in attracting tourists and showcasing the authentic Iranian identity to the world.

