

Zabol's timeless connection to history

Iranica Desk

Zabol, one of the historical and cultural cities of Iran in the Sistan and Baluchestan Province, stands out as a unique tourist destination with rich historical and cultural diversity. It offers an exceptional experience for visitors, showcasing the region's profound heritage. Situated in the northeastern part of the province and the southeastern region of Iran, Zabol shines as a gem of Sistan and Baluchestan Province, nestled within the Sistan plain and on the northern edge of Hamun Lake, the largest seasonal lake in Iran.

As one of the oldest cities in Iran, Zabol boasts a history spanning several millennia. In ancient times, it served as the center and capital of ancient Sistan, holding significant political, economic, and cultural importance. It even occupies a distinguished place in Ferdowsi's Shahnameh, referred to as the capital of Zabolistan and the land of Rostam and other Iranian heroes.

The attractions of Zabol, a treasure trove of history and nature, draw many tourists. Visiting the Burnt City (Shahr-e Sokhteh) provides a deep dive into human history, while ancient fortresses evoke memories of this land's grandeur and magnificence. In addition to historical attractions, Zabol boasts unique natural features. The Hamun Wetland, once the largest freshwater wetland in Iran, showcases a stunning and picturesque landscape. With all these characteristics, the province reflects a distinctive aspect of Iran's rich culture and civilization.

Burnt City

(Burnt City) Shahr-e Sokhteh is one of the rare ancient urban sites in this region, covering an area of 151 hectares and built on a promontory between Hamun Lake and the Hirmand River. According to paleontology theories, this city was established around 3200 BCE, inhabited through four periods from 3200 to 1800 BCE. The archaeological site of the Burnt City was constructed during the second and third millennia BCE by migrants from various regions. Remarkably, no document or inscription has been found to reveal the ancient and true name of this city; it is called the "Burnt City" due to fires that occurred during two periods between 3200 and 2750 BCE.

This site is unique because it is one of the few ancient cities where women managed family finances. Remains in-



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dicate that the city consisted of five sections: the north-eastern part of the Burnt City, central sectors, an industrial area, memorial structures, and a cemetery, all organized in a series of interconnected mounds. Discoveries from the Burnt City include the

world's first animation, the most astonishing finding in the ancient city; the oldest known brain surgery; the world's first artificial eye; a 5,000-year-old ruler; and the oldest backgammon board, highlighting its archaeological significance.

Qaleh Now

Qaleh Now (meaning new castle) is located along the Zabol-Zehak road and is the sole village that has preserved the traditional texture and indigenous architecture of the region. The houses, built with dome-shaped roofs and mud plaster, are designed to withstand the intense heat and strong winds known to sweep through the area for 120 days each year.

According to travelogues by English travelers, the village has a history of around 160 years. During the Qajar period, the region's villages were characterized by defensive and fortress-like structures. Prior to establishing this village, an older settlement named Qaleh-ye Kohneh (meaning "Old Castle") existed nearby, designed like a fortress; hence, the new village was named Qaleh Now.



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The location is notable for the remnants of a fire temple from the Sassanid period, situated in the village of Karakuyeh, approximately 25 kilometers from Zabol. Historical documents related to Zoroastrians indicate

that this fire temple held particular religious significance; its fire was crucial for religious ceremonies and to maintain flames in other temples. In addition to fire, the sun was also revered in this temple.



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Old windmills

Old windmills represent one of the historical and cultural structures of Sistan and Baluchestan Province, particularly in the city of Zahedan. These traditional structures are showcases of the engineering skills and lifestyles of ancient peoples, playing a vital role in meeting the region's agricultural needs. Zahedan was once one of Iran's major cities from the 4th to the 9th centuries AH. It is located 20 kilometers southeast of Zabol and spans an area of 325 hectares.

Khajeh Mountain

Khajeh Mountain is one of the most important tourist destinations and attractions in Sistan and Baluchestan Province, located just a short distance from Zabol. This mountain is home to valuable historical structures that, like hidden treasures, have remained concealed from tourists. Ad-

ditionally, the various beliefs and narratives associated with Khajeh Mountain amplify its significance.

As the only natural feature in the Sistan plain, Khajeh Mountain rises approximately 609 meters above sea level (about 100 meters from the ground). It hosts one of the rare archaeological sites

from the Parthian period. Although many sections of this earthen structure have been damaged due to natural and human factors, the architectural style of this fortress remains appreciated.

The mountain derives its name from the tomb of Khajeh Mahdi, whose shrine is located at its summit.



● wikipedia.org



● wikipedia.org

Machi Castle

Machi Castle is classified as a national heritage site located 70 kilometers southwest of Zabol in Sistan and Baluchestan Province. This castle, a relic from the Safavid era, was once a principal center of governance in Sistan. In the local dialect, machi means date palm, a name chosen due to the castle's location amid date palms. The structure predominantly employs adobe and mud in its construction and features a square architectural plan, with tall verandas and clay domes — characteristic elements of this historical site.



● eneshat.com

Chehel Dokhtaran Castle

Chehel Dokhtaran Castle (Forty Girls Castle) is among the notable sights of Sistan and Baluchestan Province, situated in a village called Kuh-e Khajeh (Khajeh Mountain) in Zabol. The naming of this area is deeply rooted in leg-

ends and narratives recounted by the villagers throughout history. According to these ancient tales, this area was home to forty unmarried girls who lived together, and their sounds of joy and celebration were always heard by the villagers until a sorcerer, using a specific spell,

terminated their lives, and the girls' wealth was buried in that very place.

Besides the stories, this area includes an ancient castle made of stone and clay, dating back to the Sassanid era, establishing it as one of the regions for archaeological excavations and research.