



# Lost Achaemenid quarries unearthed in Western Iran

## Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian archaeologists uncovered the long-lost quarries that supplied stone for Darius the Great's palace in ancient Susa, solving a mystery that had persisted for over two millennia. The discovery was made in Abdanan, located in Ilam Province, and has been described as "astonishing" by Mohammad Ebrahim Zarei, head of Iran's Research Institute of Cultural Heritage and Tourism, ISNA reported. During his visit to oversee archaeological excavations in Abdanan, Zarei revealed that the quarries were the primary source of limestone and ironstone used in constructing the Apadana Palace, one of the most magnificent structures of the Achaemenid Empire. The site, nestled in the Kabir Kuh mountain range, may correspond to "Abiradush," a location mentioned in Darius's inscriptions but whose exact whereabouts had remained unknown until now. The breakthrough was made possible

through a combination of field surveys, satellite imagery analysis, and geological studies conducted by a team led by archaeologist Loqman Ahmadzadeh Shohani. The discovery was initially suggested by Mohammad Heydari, a local teacher credited as the quarry's finder. Researchers identified evidence of extensive quarrying operations, including stone-cutting tools, remnants of extraction activities, and deposits of iron ore likely used for creating metal clamps in Achaemenid architecture. Zarei emphasized that this unprecedented find could rank among the most significant archaeological discoveries in recent Middle Eastern history. It offers critical insights into resource management, transportation networks, and architectural techniques employed during the Achaemenid era. The quarries are estimated to be approximately 150 kilometers from Susa, with evidence suggesting that stones were transported via a combination of mountain roads and waterways along

the Karkheh River. The Apadana Palace at Susa was a cornerstone of Achaemenid imperial architecture. Its construction required vast quantities of high-quality stone, which Darius himself referenced in inscriptions. The rediscovery of these quarries not only resolves a historical enigma but also opens new avenues for understanding ancient engineering and logistics systems. Zarei likened this discovery to finding the marble quarries used for Athens' Parthenon—a revelation with profound implications for global architectural history. Archaeologists hope this discovery will lead to further research and potentially secure UNESCO World Heritage status for the site. This is not the first time Achaemenid quarries have been unearthed. About a decade ago, Iranian archaeologists identified limestone and sandstone quarries near Pasargadae—the first capital of the Achaemenid Empire. Those sites revealed sophisticated stone-cutting techniques and trans-



portation methods involving large carts and draft animals like oxen. The latest discovery adds another layer to our understanding of how monumental projects were executed during one of history's most influential empires.

Further details about the newly discovered quarries remain under study, with additional images and findings yet to be released by Iran's Research Institute of Cultural Heritage and Tourism.

## Over one million tourism destinations identified in Iran

## Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, Reza Salehi Amiri, announced the identification of more than one million tourist destinations across the country. Speaking at a ceremony honoring contributors to the nation's Nowruz travel initiatives on April 12, he attributed Iranians' enthusiasm for travel to the country's inherent allure and diverse attractions, IRNA reported. Salehi Amiri expressed gratitude to the 1.2 million individuals involved in organizing Nowruz trips, including local officials from various levels of government and representatives from 28 agencies. He remarked, "The government is fully committed to serving the people of Iran, prioritizing their comfort and well-being above all else." He emphasized that fostering a sense of security among citizens is even

more crucial than providing services. Reflecting on this year's coordination efforts, the minister noted that challenges were minimal compared to previous years, resulting in heightened public satisfaction. "This demonstrates that the government views its role as solely serving the people," he added. During the Nowruz holiday season, over 36 million Iranians boarded on trips, underscoring the vibrancy of domestic tourism. Salehi Amiri highlighted Iran's appeal as a travel destination, citing its historical and natural diversity. He said foreign tourists often describe Iran as "beautiful, rich in civilization, and home to significant historical and natural elements." Salehi Amiri concluded by emphasizing Iran's rich heritage, with 23,000 historical sites accessible to travelers through 1,000 Nowruz events across 530 cities.

## Iranian photos on display in Budapest

## Arts & Culture Desk

A group exhibition featuring the works of independent Iranian photographers is being held at the FUGA Budapest Center of Architecture, supported by the Hungarian University of Fine Arts. Titled 'Ordinary Moment,' is displaying the creations of 18 Iranian artists and began on April 10 and will be held through May 4, ILNA reported. The showcase is the culmination of two years of research and continuous exploration centered on a shared theme. Mansour Forouzesh, who has curated and selected the photographs for this exhibition, elaborates on the topic that unifies these works: "Just as the diverse climates of Iran reflect its multifaceted society, 'Ordinary Moment' captures this richness through a carefully curated selection of photographs. This exhibition offers a glimpse into the everyday narratives and simple events that shape life in Iran. By featuring the works of emerging and independent Iranian artists, it presents authentic and meaningful images of daily life, revealing intimate moments from the heart of Iranian society."



Among the photographers participating in the exhibition are Amir Masoud Arabshahi, Arash Tavakoli, Bita Kahnamui, and Fatemeh Salehi.

## Iranian short film wins top prize at Dutch festival



## Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian short film 'Shooti,' directed by Shiva Taheri and produced by Arash Shirvani, won the Best Film Award at the 8th Holland MENA Film Festival, held in The Hague on April 5-6.

The festival aims to foster cultural exchange between the Middle East, North Africa (MENA), and Europe, spotlighting independent cinema from these regions, Mehr News Agency reported. Previously recognized with an honorary diploma at the MikroFAF in Belgrade, 'Shooti' continues to garner international acclaim. At the Holland MENA Film Festival, the jury lauded the film's innovative approach and realistic themes, highlighting its exceptional cinematography and meaningful silences that convey a powerful message. The jury's statement praised Taheri's ability to narrate her story through a visually poetic language. The film features performances by Mohammad Ali Ghavidel, Mahin Sisizadeh, Danial Mahmoudnia, Fardin Rahmanpour, Afshin Bakhshesh, Pouria Fallahpour, and child actors Mohammad Sozaei and Navid Bandari.

## Tehran named guest of honor for 2026 Baghdad book fair



## Arts & Culture Desk

Iran has been officially invited as the guest of honor at the 2026 Baghdad International

Book Fair, marking a significant milestone in cultural collaboration between the two nations. The announcement was made by Ebrahim Heydari, spokes-

person and deputy director of the 36th Tehran International Book Fair, during discussions with Abdul-Wahab Al-Radi, head of Iraq's Publishers Union, IRNA reported. Heydari revealed that final arrangements are underway to allocate space for Iraqi publishers at the upcoming Tehran International Book Fair, which is set to take place from May 7 to May 17, 2025, at Imam Khomeini Mosalla under the slogan "Let's Read for Iran." During a meeting with Iraqi delegates, including Al-Radi, it was agreed that Iran would host a dedicated pavilion at the 2026 book fair.