

Irania Desk

Salmas is a city in the West Azarbaijan Province of Iran, bordered to the north by Khoy, to the east by Shabestar and Lake Urmia, and to the south by Urmia. Covering an area of 2,544 square kilometers, Salmas boasts a rich history spanning 10,000 years, making it the first chessboard city in Iran. Located 90 kilometers north of Urmia, Salmas lies near the Iran-Turkey border along the shores of Lake Urmia. According to the book 10,000-Year History of Salmas, after the Dilmaqaan earthquake, which resulted in the complete destruction of the city, the recognition of the necessity for a new city to be established — not merely to clear the ruins — led to the implementation of a modern urban planning model featuring a chessboard layout, designed by Asadollah Khan. One of the advantages of this layout is that all urban services are strategically positioned to minimize travel distances, thereby saving time for residents navigating the city, IRNA wrote.

Tohid Malekzadeh, an author, noted that in this urban planning method, facilities such as religious, educational, and health establishments were designed in accordance with the pedestrian path regulations of the time. Consequently, since all houses, offices, and public buildings are visible, no structure is concealed, allowing for easy accessibility. He pointed out that this urban planning approach was an innovative concept for its time and was embraced by urban planners of that era. Furthermore, another advantage of this city's design is its chessboard layout, which effectively alleviates urban traffic issues caused by vehicle congestion common in modern cities. In Salmas, it is possible to reach a desired location via four different routes, making traffic less problematic.

As the first chessboard city in Iran, Salmas not only showcases beautiful architectural styles but also features numerous historical and natural attractions that draw both domestic and foreign tourists each year.

Why Salmas should be on your travel list



Ahranjan Hill

Ahranjan Hill, rising about four meters above the surrounding terrain, is considered one of the oldest human

settlements, dating back to the late 7th and 8th millennia BCE. The remnants found on this hill extend the history of Salmas back 10,000 years.

Sheikh Bathhouse

The Sheikh Bathhouse was constructed during the Pahlavi dynasty, employing traditional Iranian architectural styles. The construction of the bathhouse took three years, from 1930 to 1932. It features a rectangular geometric layout with an area of 860 square meters, and its floor is situated three and a half meters below ground level. The bathhouse was supplied with water from two streams located to the south and west of the city. The materials used in its construction include stone, brick, plaster, lime, and sand. Following the earthquake of 1930,



the Sheikh Bathhouse is considered the first and oldest bathhouse in Salmas. In 2000, this historic site was registered as one of the attractions on

Iran's National Heritage List and has since transformed into a cultural and artistic complex, serving as an exhibition space for anthropological works.

Qarniyaroq Cave

Qarniyaroq Cave is one of the most captivating natural attractions in Salmas, located in a mountain bearing the same name.

According to local legends, a tale is associated with this cave concerning a girl who had three brothers vying for her hand in marriage. The

condition for marriage was that one brother must create a cave within the mountain; whoever completed this task first would win her.

While the fissures in the cave were primarily formed due to geological changes, the presence of chambers suggests some level of human intervention in its formation. Geographically, the cave lies in the southern part of Salmas, where the remnants of a fortress dating back to the time of the Medes can also be found.



Zola Chai Valley

Zola Chai Valley is another natural gem in Salmas and is regarded by locals as a cozy and idyllic spot for vacationing. A seasonal river flows through this valley, enhancing its greenery and charm. In spring, when the surrounding mountains come alive with

lush vegetation and the river — fed by melting snow from the mountains — flows through, it creates a breathtaking scene. The river originates from the mountains along the Iran-Turkey border. During rainy seasons, when precipitation is abundant, this river empties into Lake Urmia.

Khor Khoreh Waterfall

The Khor Khoreh Waterfall is situated in a valley of the same name, located in southern Salmas, between the villages of Shur Gol and Mamakan. This waterfall, found deep within a valley approximately 80 meters deep, is considered one of the main beautiful recreational spots in the

area and is one of West Azerbaijan's natural attractions. When traveling from Salmas to Urmia, after covering about 11 kilometers, you will notice a side road on the right marked with a sign for the village of Tamar. Following this road and passing through Tamar village, you will reach Khor Khoreh Valley af-

ter an additional 20-kilometer journey. From the heights of the valley, you can witness the stunning Khor Khoreh Waterfall, which is estimated to be around 42 meters tall. The valley is filled with small and large rocks, mosses, and shrubs, and the water from the waterfall cascades into a small pond within the valley, creating a pleasant environment.

As spring approaches and rains begin, along with the melting of snow, the waterfall reaches its peak flow, providing an incredibly picturesque view. Locals believe that the soothing sound of the waterfall is how the valley earned its name. This location attracts numerous tourists annually.



Abgarm Village

Abgarm village is another notable village in Salmas, celebrated for its unparalleled natural beauty and extraordinary landscapes. It is renowned for its pristine environment and hot springs, drawing many visitors each year for recreation and healing. In this village, you can explore various attractions, including

a hydrotherapy complex, the Imam Shafi'i Mosque, Shour Darreh Waterfall, a dilapidated teahouse, and the village's beautiful natural scenery. Abgarm has a rich history, established many years ago, and dating back hundreds of years. The village is characterized by semi-mountainous terrain filled with vineyards and diverse fruit trees.

West Azarbaijan Province

The lush landscapes and historical sites of West Azarbaijan Province have established this province as one of the best destinations for sightseeing. The capital of West Azarbaijan Province is the city of Urmia, which features numerous attractions, including

museums, springs, traditional markets, and historical buildings. In addition to Urmia, other cities in the province — such as Salmas, Mahabad, Khoy, Takab, Chaldoran, Sardasht, and Maku — host beautiful ancient and natural sites. This land is a realm of wonders. Throughout this ancient territory, traces of magnificent

civilizations linger. The convergence of various religions and ethnicities, combined with pristine and captivating nature, pleasant weather, and warm-hearted, hospitable people, creates a vibrant tapestry of beauty for every traveler to admire. Exploring the diverse corners of this province offers a unique and

delightful experience. This region is home to the legacies of great figures such as Shams Tabrizi, Puriya-ye Vali, and even Cyrus the Great. In West Azarbaijan Province, you will encounter astonishing ancient sites and breathtaking, untouched natural landscapes waiting for you to discover. The attractions of West

Azarbaijan are not only prominent in Iran but also recognized around the world. Their allure goes beyond beauty and antiquity, intertwining with legends and remarkable natural phenomena. Furthermore, this province boasts unique religious attractions, some of which have gained international acclaim.