

Bewitching Shidvar Island protecting nature, promoting sustainable tourism

Iranica Desk

There are numerous islands in Hormozgan Province, including Lavan, Hendurabi, Larak, Abu Musa, Kish, and Qeshm, which are well-known for their tourism and recreational opportunities within the Middle East. However, among these, there is a small island covering an area of just one square kilometer called Shidvar, or Marou, renowned for its pristine condition and being an ideal destination for a one-day excursion.

This untouched island is situated approximately 1.5 kilometers from Lavan Island and is part of the Shibkuh district of Bandar Lengeh. Visits are permitted only in groups and require prior approval from the local Department of Environment, IRNA wrote.

Since the island has no air or rail connections, reaching it involves traveling by road from Bandar Abbas, heading roughly 358 kilometers west towards Bandar-e Moqam. From there, visitors can take a boat to Marou Island.

Fauna

The island is a protected wildlife refuge, home to various species including hawksbill turtles that lay eggs there, along with seabirds such as terns. Because bird nesting occurs in May and June, it is highly recommended to plan visits during this period. To observe turtle nesting, you can take an early morning boat trip to



explore the beaches. Dolphins and sharks are also frequently seen around the island. Furthermore, the island hosts several venomous snakes, notably rattlesnakes, which have led locals to refer to the island as Maran or Marou (Mar means snake

in Persian). Safety precautions are advised when exploring the area.

Flora

Marou Island is inhabited by a variety of salt-tolerant plants that are resistant to drought, some reaching heights of up to



one meter. Portions of the rocks and cliffs are also covered with moss and green algae, which, during cooler months, adorn the beaches with a lush appearance. As temperatures increase, these algae change color and dry out. A significant portion of the is-

land is covered by the Shidvar Wetland, which has been registered as one of Iran's Ramsar international wetlands. The island remains uninhabited and features sandy beaches approximately 200 meters long. Walking along the shoreline,

climbing small hills, and observing the unique flora and fauna are among the most attractive aspects of ecotourism on the island.

Activities such as diving, swimming, and walking are especially enjoyable in pleasant weather and away from noise pollution, offering visitors a tranquil experience. Additionally, fishermen operating around the island often sell fresh fish, which can be grilled in nature over a campfire, adding to the outdoor experience. Another highlight of Marou Island is the lighthouse, which visitors can ascend to enjoy panoramic sea views and watch the sunset.

Important recommendations:

- Avoid approaching nesting sites during bird migration periods.
- Turtles lay their eggs exclusively on this island. Your presence near nesting sites can cause stress to the animals and may prevent them from returning in future seasons.
- Refrain from collecting soil from the island.
- Minimize your environmental impact by limiting your presence, as there are no facilities for extended stays.
- Do not leave litter behind, including plastic bags and other waste.
- For leisure, it is best to visit from mid-fall to late winter. Since turtles lay their eggs in May, access to the island is restricted during that period.

A journey through historic Deyr-e Gachin Caravanserai near Qom



Qom is one of Iran's oldest and most historically significant cities, renowned for its religious, cultural, and architectural heritage. As a center of spiritual learning and pilgrimage, Qom has preserved numerous ancient structures and sites that reflect its rich history spanning over millennia. Its proximity to historic trade routes and spiritual centers has contributed to its importance as a hub of cultural exchange and development throughout the ages.

Deyr-e Gachin Caravanserai is situated eighty kilometers northeast of Qom. Renowned as the mother of Iranian caravanserais, this ancient monument was built along the Silk Road and the historic route connecting Rey to Qom. Today, it lies within the boundaries of Kavir National Park. The caravanserai has been officially registered on Iran's National Heritage List.



The construction of Deyr-e Gachin dates back to the Sassanid era, with repairs carried out during the Seljuk, Safavid, and Qajar periods. Historical texts indicate that it has also been known by other names, including Ardeshir and Deyr-e Kaj. Among these, the name Ardeshir suggests a possible connection

to Ardeshir I, the Sassanid king. Nearby, other historical structures such as the Rock Castle of Mohammadabad Kaj and Qaleh Goli can be found in the vicinity of Deyr-e Gachin. The caravanserai is a Chahartaq — a square structure supported by four arches — covering an area of approximately 12,000



hectares. It comprises various sections, including gateways, four rectangular towers, two half-towers flanking the main gate, a 300-square-meter mosque, two minarets, a stone mill, a bathhouse, two vestibules, a prayer hall, over forty rooms, staircases leading to the roof, and two wells. Outside the main complex, addi-

tional structures are present on its western side, such as a rectangular fire temple, a fortress, a brick kiln, two water reservoirs, and a graveyard. When considering the entire spread of the site, including these external features, its total area extends to about 19,000 hectares. The complex is enclosed by a wall exceeding

five meters in height, one meter in width, and eighty meters in length. Sections of the wall feature crenellations, and it is constructed of bricks arranged in a cross pattern. The bricks, characteristic of the Sassanid period, exhibit exquisite details and were also used during the Seljuk era for restoration.

Within the caravanserai, a vestibule leads beyond the first gateway to the Miansara (central hall). This area houses a mosque, bathhouse, mill, and other sections. Surrounding this core are thirty-six single-story rooms, each with a single door. Those located above the Miansara level are equipped with ivans — open, vaulted or arched spaces projecting from the walls.

On the northeast side, an alcove features an octagonal-shaped Miansara. Additionally, there are rooms with three doors each opening to the outside.