

UNESCO welcomes Hawraman for living cultural significance

Iranica Desk

Four years ago, on July 27, 2021, the dreamlike paradise for tourists in western Iran was inscribed as Iran's 26th site on the UNESCO World Heritage List. This unique and captivating region, renowned for the authentic culture of its people, its pristine and breathtaking nature, and its ancient and enigmatic history, was registered over an area of 409,000 hectares — including both the core and buffer zones — spanning the two provinces of Kermanshah and Kurdistan.

Today, on the occasion of the fourth anniversary of the inscription of the Hawraman Cultural Landscape, ISNA conducted an interview with a member of the team that developed the dossier, in order to learn more about the criteria that enabled this region to achieve global recognition.

Aziz Mostafaei stated that Hawraman is one of the largest World Heritage Sites in the world. He explained that UNESCO uses ten parameters for world heritage inscription: six cultural and four natural criteria. The Hawraman dossier met two of these criteria, both falling within the cultural category. Mostafaei emphasized that obtaining UNESCO inscription for cultural sites is an exceptionally challenging process, noting, "The inscription of Hawraman is a symbol of a living, dynamic, and authentic culture and is a great honor for western Iran."

He also highlighted the extensive efforts invested in preparing the dossier. For this purpose, since 2016 in Kurdistan and 2017 in Kermanshah, the Hawraman National Heritage Site was established, and a dedicated, skilled team worked diligently on the dossier.

He continued, "When countries



intend to nominate sites for the UNESCO World Heritage List, they must submit their tentative list at least two years in advance to be considered for formal registration. In Hawraman's case, the site's name was first submitted to UNESCO in 2007." Mostafaei described the inscription of the Hawraman Cultural Landscape as a major accomplishment at the time, adding, "Countries have limited quotas for registering World Heritage Sites, so they tend to prioritize those with strong, well-prepared dossiers when submitting nominations to UNESCO."

He further explained that, in order for the Hawraman Cultural Landscape dossier to be prioritized by the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, all relevant officials at that time — from the governor and members of Parliament to heritage authorities and local activists — united their efforts in support, which proved invaluable during that period. He said, "The area inscribed as a World Heritage Site is essentially a complex, interwoven landscape of mountains and rivers, surrounded on all sides by plains. The Mahidasht and Za-



● adventureiran.com

hab Plains in Kermanshah, the Shahrizor Plain in Iraq, and the Leilakh Plain in Kurdistan Province are the expansive plains framing the towering mountains of Hawraman." He noted that the Hawraman region is not limited solely to the two Iranian provinces of Kurdistan and Kermanshah, adding, "A portion of this region lies within Iraq, and if that section were included in the dossier, the Hawraman Cultural Landscape would become an international transboundary site, greatly enhancing its significance. Furthermore, this would strengthen cultural

ties between the two countries." Mostafaei also highlighted the prestigious cultural value of Hawraman from UNESCO's perspective, stating, "Considering the rapid global changes and transformations underway, cultures worldwide are becoming increasingly homogenized, and diverse cultural identities are gradually fading and disappearing. For this reason, UNESCO places particular emphasis on cultural dossiers and gives them special attention, as it is vital to preserve authentic cultures, languages, customs, and local cuisines."

He added, "About one year before Hawraman's official inscription as a World Heritage Site, Hesam Mahdi, a UNESCO evaluator, visited Kermanshah and toured the Hawraman region. The cultural features of the area deeply impressed him."

He continued, "During his visit to Javanroud County, his trip coincided with the ancient Suleh Ceremony — a tradition thousands of years old — held beside the Lileh River in the village of Lulem in the Kalashi district. We invited him to observe this ritual, which garnered great interest and admiration from him."

Mostafaei explained that the UNESCO evaluator explored various cultural dimensions of Hawraman during his visit to Kermanshah, saying, "The primary factor that led to Hawraman's inscription on the World Heritage List — and that today stands as a great honor for western Iran — was the culture of this region."

"We must be steadfast in preserving and protecting it. At the same time, we hope that, through the wise leadership of provincial officials, suitable conditions will be created so that we can fully harness the benefits of this globally registered region, allowing local communities, residents of Kermanshah, and even all Iranians to share in its blessings."

He concluded by noting that Kermanshah Province currently has three World Heritage Sites: the Bisotun Inscription, the Hawraman Cultural Landscape, and the Bisotun Caravanserai. This underscores the province's strong standing in terms of World Heritage Sites. However, he believes this number is insufficient and, given the province's rich cultural potential, added that efforts could also be made toward registering Taq Bostan, the Anahita Temple and the collection of Sassanid sites in Qasr-e Shirin.

Money Museum showcases monetary heritage from ancient to modern times

Iranica Desk

The Money Museum in the Dafeh Cultural Museum Complex, as the first specialized and permanent museum in Iran focused on forms of exchange such as coins, banknotes, and other securities, was inaugurated in Tehran on July 8, 1997. This museum narrates part of the history of Iran — a history told through coins.

The museum exhibits the evolution of trade over various historical periods and the role of early exchange tools, like exchange rings. Visitors can also become acquainted with the first marked metal pieces and the earliest standardized coins, which were mint-

ed in the kingdom of Lydia, Mehr News Agency reported.

One of the highlights of the museum is the display of the first Iranian coins, struck during the Achaemenid era on the order of Darius the Great — symbols of the intelligence and power of Iranians of that time. Other coins, such as those of satraps and subordinate rulers of the Achaemenids bearing images of chariots, ships, and other artistic motifs, are also part of the museum's collection. The collection includes coins from the periods of Alexander the Great, the Seleucids, Parthians, and Sassanids. These artifacts reflect the rich history and artistry of Iran through their images and inscriptions.

A significant portion of the museum is dedicated to Islamic coins from the Umayyad, Abbasid, Ghaznavid, Seljuk, and other dynasties, illustrating the arrival and spread of Islam in Iran. The art of calligraphy is a particular highlight in the design of these coins. Beyond coins, a section of the museum is devoted to banknotes. From the first Iranian banknotes issued during the Qajar era under Naser al-Din Shah to contemporary examples, all are displayed here. The museum even preserves the original prototype of the first printed banknote in Iran — each banknote telling part of the collective memory of Iranians. The museum introduces the his-

tory of banknotes from the era of stamped transactions to the present day. There's also a section dedicated to the history of banknote issuance in the world, with both wall explanations and exhibits that showcase the evolution of currency in Iran and the world. In a section of information related to the history of the publication of banknotes in the world, it is mentioned: The Chinese were the first who, in the mid-10th century CE, invented something similar to banknotes and named it chao. According to historians, the use of paper money dates back to the Song dynasty (960-1279 CE) in China. The first person to issue it was Tai, the first emperor of the famous

Song dynasty. The people of China used various materials to make paper money. They made banknotes using paper made from mulberry tree bark. The most important paper money of the Yuan dynasty period was called Jiaochao. The issuance and distribution of chao is considered the emergence of a real paper money system. At that time, and before seeing these magical papers, for travelers and foreign tourists, seeing chao, which was used for buying, selling, and paying taxes with various goods, was astonishing. Some travelers such as Marco Polo and Ibn Battuta, the Moroccan traveler who both visited China about the same time, described

paper money in their travelogues. Historical evidence indicates that apparently, the world's first non-paper banknote and credit money was common in Iran during the reign of Artaxerxes III of the Achaemenid dynasty in 358 BCE, about 2,400 years ago. This credit money was called Shahakan or Shahagan. It was a special royal seal that was pressed hot onto pieces of leather creating a raised impression and functioning similarly to today's banknotes. However, the first banknote resembling modern banknotes was printed on January 5, 1691, at the Bank of Stockholm in Sweden, which is currently kept in the museum of this bank.

