

Preserving Iran’s history through cross-sector collaboration

Iranica Desk

In recent years, the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts has pursued goals such as preserving national identity, strengthening cultural diplomacy, and achieving sustainable development through a cross-sectoral approach in its three main areas of mission. Despite existing challenges, the actions taken — especially in the field of cultural heritage—not only demonstrate the ministry’s serious commitment to protecting Iran’s history and culture but also serve as a model for synergy between the public sector, private sector, and non-governmental organizations.

Mohammad Nasiri-Haqiqat, head of the Pasargadae World Heritage Site, wrote that among the commendable measures of this ministry in the cultural heritage sector are the registration of historical and natural sites on national and international lists, conducting field and archaeological research, restoration and revival of historical buildings, attracting private sector participation in projects, and promoting a heritage-centered culture in society, according to IRNA.

Holding festivals, educational programs, scientific and cultural meetings, and public initiatives to improve “heritage literacy” among all segments of society have played a significant role in bringing people closer to their cultural identity.



Tourism sector

In the tourism sector, the ministry’s focus on developing infrastructure and facilities in lesser-known areas and empowering local communities has created a clear vision for “sustainable tourism.” The growth of eco-tourism accommodations, the organization of festivals such as Nowruzgah, traditional ceremonies, and local food festivals have not only boosted the economy but also provided an opportunity to introduce indigenous culture to both domestic and international tourists.

Regional and international co-operation for developing joint tourism indicates Iran’s growing role in cultural diplomacy.

Handicrafts

In the field of handicrafts, actions such as registering handicraft cities and villages, supporting artists by offering facilities, providing specialized training, holding exhibitions and domestic and international markets, and innovating in design and packaging have led to a renaissance of this authentic art and attracted the younger generation. The fusion of traditional art with modern design has placed Iran’s handicrafts in a newly competitive position.

Pasargadae World Heritage Site

The Pasargadae World Heritage Site, one of the country’s most



important historic sites, has undertaken numerous actions aligned with the ministry’s overarching policies in three areas: conservation and restoration, development of infrastructure, and research and outreach.

Key actions at the Pasargadae World Heritage Site include launching conservation and restoration workshops for Cyrus’s tomb, organizing, protecting, and restoring the watercourses of the royal garden of Pasargadae and the Mazafari Caravanserai within the Pasargadae World Heritage Area, and replacing part of the surrounding fence to strengthen the site’s physical protection.

Infrastructure developments

In the infrastructure section, phase 3 of the route improvement leading to Cyrus’s tomb and the completion of the administrative building of the base have been completed.

In the research and study section, which is considered one of the ongoing programs of the site, three projects have been underway in the past year. Also in the cultural section, introduction and training, the Nowruz Festival, regional handicrafts exhibition, local cuisine and games, a photo exhibition introducing the region’s historic and natural tourist attractions, and the first training course in stone

conservation and restoration at the Pasargadae World Heritage Site are among the important actions carried out in the past year.

Considering the primary mission of all world and national heritage sites, which is to protect the historical monuments under their management, ongoing conservation and restoration workshops remain a priority. Moreover, studies and research, as the precondition for all related efforts, are ongoing and cultural activities in the fields of introduction and education remain on the site’s agenda.

Pasargadae World Heritage Site regards itself as committed to continuing the path of protection, introduction, and education, and, leaning on scientific experience, technical knowledge, the involvement of local communities, and support from the ministry, steps forward in safeguarding one of the oldest symbols of Iran’s civilization.

It is hoped that, with a more comprehensive perspective, firmer resolve, and stronger trust in the country’s human and natural capacities, we can take more solid steps toward achieving the broader goals of the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts.

Adventure awaits in Helvan Desert

Located about 93 kilometers from Tabas, the Helvan Desert in South Khorasan Province is one of Iran’s most captivating and expansive deserts, making it a popular destination for desert explorers and adventure seekers. Renowned for its vast sandy plains, towering sand dunes, and unique landscapes, the Helvan Desert offers an exceptional experience for those eager to immerse themselves in the stark yet stunning beauty of the Iranian desert.

This magnificent desert is an ideal destination for travelers interested in exploring Iran’s desert environments, offering a perfect blend of nature, tranquility, and breathtaking nighttime skies that capture the true essence of desert adventure. Whether you’re a desert trek enthusiast, a photographer seeking dramatic landscapes, or someone simply yearning for peace in an untouched natural setting, the Helvan Desert is a must-see, sunnyiran.com wrote.

One of the first things visitors notice upon entering the Helvan Desert is the distinctive sand dunes and sandstone mountains. The desert’s terrain is dominated by sand dunes that sometimes rise up to 100 meters, crafting majestic ridges that shift and reshape with the winds. These dunes, com-



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posed of fine sand particles that shimmer in sunlight, provide ever-changing views that delight the eye. Surrounding mountain ranges offer a striking contrast to the vast dunes, creating a dramatic backdrop that enhances the desert’s beauty. The unique sandstone formations, sculpted over centuries by wind erosion, are key elements of the landscape that add to the region’s natural allure.

Despite harsh conditions, the Helvan Desert supports a variety of wildlife adapted to the arid environment. Lizards, scorpions, and desert foxes inhabit the area, while bird-

watchers may spot species such as sparrows and eagles that call this desert home. Perhaps the most profound feature of the Helvan Desert is its tranquility. The silence here is deep and restorative, providing an escape from the hustle and bustle of daily life. With no nearby human settlements and virtually no noise pollution, it’s an ideal place to connect with nature at its purest.

Spending a night beneath the desert sky is highly recommended. As night falls, temperatures drop and the sky transforms into a dazzling canopy of stars. The clear desert air offers some of the best star-



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gazing in Iran, where travelers can marvel at the Milky Way and constellations hidden from urban eyes.

The night sky is one of the Helvan Desert’s most memorable sights. Its pollution-free atmosphere allows for crystal-clear views — perfect for astrophotography or peaceful nighttime camping. Lying beneath the stars, you’ll hear only the gentle rustling of the wind and the occasional call of desert wildlife.

The stillness of the desert night is both peaceful and surreal, creating an almost meditative experience. It’s a chance to disconnect from the digital world,

appreciate natural beauty, and enjoy solitude or quiet companionship in a serene setting.

Helvan Desert is also a hub for desert sports and adventure. Its expansive dunes are ideal for dune bashing, where visitors ride off-road vehicles up and down the slopes for an exhilarating thrill. Camel rides offer a traditional and authentic way to explore the landscape at a slower, more reflective pace. For those who prefer hiking, trekking on foot allows a close-up experience of the desert’s flora and fauna and its serene atmosphere. Photographers will find endless inspiration in the sharp contrasts of sand,

mountains, and sky.

Beyond its natural beauty, Helvan Desert holds historical and cultural significance. The surrounding region features numerous historical sites and cultural landmarks that reveal the area’s rich heritage. The nearby ancient city of Tabas has long been an important trade and cultural center, with preserved traditional architecture.

Moreover, as part of the greater Khorasan region, the desert is steeped in the history of Persian civilization. Visitors can explore remnants of caravanse-rais, ancient trade routes, and other relics, enriching their desert experience with historical depth.

The best time to visit Helvan Desert is during spring and fall when temperatures are moderate and the desert is more hospitable. Summers can be intensely hot, often soaring above 40°C (104°F), making outdoor activities more difficult. In contrast, spring and autumn offer ideal weather for trekking, stargazing, and photography.

Winter brings cooler conditions and fewer visitors, but nights can get quite cold. Regardless of the season, visitors should come prepared with appropriate clothing, hats, sunscreen, and plenty of water to ensure comfort and safety during their desert adventure.