

# Marivan keeps heritage alive through craft



Nazok Kari  
● IRNA



Klash shoes  
● IRNA



Wool shawls  
● iribnews.ir

## Iranica Desk

In the winding alleyways of Marivan, performance is not limited to the stage. Every home, workshop, and market-place transforms into a living tableau of art and daily life. Here, creativity spills beyond the boundaries of the theater, into the hands of artisans who shape wood, yarn, and wool into expressions of culture, identity, and memory. Cultural events have long been recognized as engines of tourism and local economic growth — a role especially vital in regions like Kurdistan, where traditional crafts are deeply interwoven with everyday life. The gathering of artists, performers, and visitors in Marivan offers an opportunity to blend art, business, and community identity in a celebration of creativity and heritage, Mehr News Agency wrote. The 18th Marivan International Festival of Street Theater, taking place from October 26 to 30, features a diverse program including open competitions, children and youth performances, traditional rituals, international showcases, the “Nishtiman” (homeland) section, and educational workshops. The festival’s convergence of

national and international artists, alongside local spectators and tourists, provides an ideal setting to promote Marivan’s renowned handicrafts and encourage visitors to take home a piece of the city’s artistic spirit.

## A city of crafts, creativity

Marivan is known not only for its cultural festivals but also for its rich tradition of handmade crafts. Visitors looking to explore and purchase local goods can visit the city’s main bazaar, the Zarivar Lake local market, or the Bashmaq border market. Among the most treasured local creations are the Daf and Tanbur, two iconic Kurdish musical instruments made by skilled artisans whose craftsmanship keeps centuries-old traditions alive. The fine woodcrafts of Kurdistan Province are among its most visually striking art forms. Known as Nazok Kari, this delicate craft involves creating functional and decorative objects from beautifully grained and colored wood. Through meticulous design and careful finishing, artisans produce intricate wooden pieces. Marivan’s artisans also produce an impressive range of handwoven goods. One of the most notable is the prayer rug (janamaz

or sajjadeh), woven from wool on traditional looms. Skilled mowj weavers can create two of these intricately patterned rugs in a single day, reflecting both practicality and devotion. Northwest of the city lies Zarivar Lake, surrounded by reed-filled wetlands where local women engage in reed weaving, turning natural resources into beautiful, functional mats. In the surrounding villages, residents also produce hand-knit woolen socks, known locally as Pojvaneh, prized for their warmth and cultural symbolism. Among Marivan’s most celebrated crafts is the Givah, locally known as Klash — traditional Kurdish footwear made from cotton and thread. Lightweight yet durable, Klash shoes are cool in summer and warm in winter, perfectly adapted to the region’s climate. This centuries-old art earned Marivan global recognition in 2017, when it was designated a World City of Givah by the World Crafts Council. Weaving traditions also thrive across Kurdistan. From kilim (flat-woven rugs) to wool shawls and Jajim, artisans combine two-ply dyed wool for the weft with cotton threads for the warp, producing textiles that

are both resilient and richly patterned. Other traditional crafts include embroidered hats, shawls woven from goat hair and sheep’s wool, and handcrafted jewelry and accessories — including necklaces made of clove buds and rosaries from wild pistachio (Baneh) wood. The vibrant Kurdish dresses and scarves, celebrated for their color and design, remain an enduring symbol of local identity.

## Linking art, tourism, heritage

Tourism researcher Arash Nooraqaei highlights the connection between culture and sustainable tourism. He argues that well-planned artistic events — whether in theater, music, or visual arts — can play a transformative role in boosting local economies. “If a cultural event is conceptually strong, well-timed, and strategically located,” he said, “and if the organizing team takes a holistic approach, it can meaningfully enhance tourism and strengthen handicraft-based livelihoods.” Drawing a comparison, he added, “In Italy’s Murano Island, elderly women weave lace by the streets, and tourists are welcomed into glassmaking workshops. This is creative tourism

— where the true art lies not just in what is made, but in how it is shared. It’s not merely about selling; it’s about live performance and participation.” A handicraft researcher Farzad Rashidi also emphasized the potential of such events for economic growth in Kurdistan. “With its deep-rooted history, artistic heritage, and abundance of natural resources, Kurdistan offers exceptional diversity in handicrafts,” he explained. “If festivals like this are organized with foresight, they can greatly benefit the province during off-peak tourist seasons — boosting both income and return visitation.” Rashidi noted that during May and June, Kurdistan Province often experiences an overwhelming number of tourists, which can reduce service quality due to overcrowding. Strategic cultural programming in other months, he argued, helps balance tourism flow while sustaining local economies. He added, “Across the world, festivals — directly or indirectly — contribute to local prosperity. A festival with an 18-year history, such as Marivan’s, has certainly earned its audience.” Rashidi views Marivan’s designation as a World Craft City as an invaluable asset that must



Pojvaneh  
● kurdkala.com

be managed wisely. “Everyone seeks to build a brand,” he concluded, “but Marivan already is a brand. The key lies in understanding the audience — using the presence of artists and tourists to showcase, promote, and sell local handicrafts in ways that honor their authenticity and sustain their makers.” As the curtain rises on the 18th Marivan International Festival of Street Theater, the city once again proves that in Kurdistan, art is not confined to the stage — it lives and breathes through the hands, hearts, and streets of its people.

# Zargar offers rare glimpse into unusual Iranian village

## Iranica Desk

Tucked away in the heart of the Qazvin plains lies a village unlike any other in the region. Its appearance, culture, and atmosphere bear little resemblance to surrounding settlements, making Zargar a remarkable destination for travelers seeking something truly extraordinary. The village’s inhabitants, with their European features, an unfamiliar language, and stories steeped in mystery, create an air of intrigue — a place where the past remains shrouded in ambiguity and every corner seems to hold a new tale. A drive of less than two hours from Tehran is enough to reach this village, which hides astonishing stories within its quiet streets and scenic surroundings. Located near Abyek in Qazvin, Zargar’s small population presents a striking contrast to typical Iranian villages. The locals, with light hair, colored eyes, and a language unknown to most outsiders, offer visitors a glimpse into a world that feels simultaneously familiar and foreign. These distinctive traits have led many travelers to describe Zargar as “a piece of



Europe in Iran,” highlighting its unique charm and cultural divergence, IRNA wrote. Among the village’s most fascinating features is the native language spoken by its people. The Zargaris converse in a tongue completely alien to outsiders, with clear roots in Indo-European languages. Known locally as Zargari or Romano, this language survives only within this small, tightly-knit community. For travelers with a passion for culture, linguistics, or literature, hearing the villagers’ everyday conversations is an experience that cannot be replicated elsewhere. The origins of Zargar’s inhabitants remain cloaked in mystery. Some accounts suggest that their ancestors



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tors were European migrants who settled in this area centuries ago, while others maintain that the villagers are of Iranian descent, with their distinctive features and language arising from cultural and linguistic mixing over time. The

absence of definitive historical records, combined with these differing narratives, has only enhanced the village’s allure and enigmatic charm, drawing visitors who are fascinated by history and heritage. The village is home to roughly

800 residents. Most of the men work in livestock farming, agriculture, and beekeeping, while the women, in addition to managing household responsibilities, produce dairy products and handicrafts that reflect traditional skills passed down through generations. While intra-village marriages were common in the past, many young people today form family ties with individuals from other regions. Despite these modern changes, traditional customs and rituals continue to hold a central place in local celebrations and ceremonies, providing a living link to Zargar’s heritage. Reaching Zargar is relatively straightforward. From Tehran, travelers can take the Tehran–

Karaj freeway and continue toward Qazvin. After passing Abyek, a side road leads through the vast Qazvin plains and eventually to this distinctive village. With light traffic, the journey from the capital takes less than two hours, although travel time may be longer during holidays or peak travel periods. The village enjoys moderate weather throughout much of the year, making it accessible in all seasons. However, spring is widely considered the best time to visit, when the countryside is lush and trees burst into blossom, creating a vibrant and picturesque setting. Summer also offers a pleasant escape, as Zargar’s cooler temperatures provide a welcome relief compared to nearby cities. For those wishing to avoid crowds and enjoy a more serene experience, visiting midweek is recommended. Zargar’s combination of mystery, cultural uniqueness, and natural beauty has established it as one of Qazvin’s most intriguing destinations, offering visitors a rare glimpse into a village where the past and present coexist in a delicate, captivating balance.