

# Recent rains boost Fanuj's ecotourism potential

## Iranica Desk

Recent rainfall in Fanuj, Sistan and Baluchestan Province, has revitalized natural water flows, enhancing the environmental appeal of the Moganshahi tourism area and Fanuj Gorge. With its unique geological formations, pristine landscapes, and rich ecological potential, the region is increasingly recognized as one of the most promising destinations for nature-based tourism development in southern Sistan and Baluchestan.

Situated within the Fanuj Gorge, the Moganshahi tourism area boasts natural pools, seasonal waterfalls, rocky riverbeds, gorge walls, and perennial or seasonal streams. These features create ideal conditions for a wide range of tourism activities, including ecotourism, nature exploration, water-based recreation, and relaxation-oriented travel. Such attributes make the region particularly appealing to visitors seeking untouched natural environments and lesser-known destinations, chtn.ir wrote.

Speaking on the significance of the area for local tourism, Head of Fanuj Tourism Department, Alireza Nosrati stated, "Moganshahi and Fanuj Gorge represent some of the most outstanding natural assets of the city. Thanks to the diversity of landscapes and ecological features, the area has strong potential to be strategically developed as a sustainable tourism destination."



He added, "The natural character of this region calls for a tourism approach that emphasizes ecotourism and conservation, ensuring responsible use of environmental resources while safeguarding them for future generations."

Nosrati further highlighted the role of tourism in local development, "Purposeful tourism development in Moganshahi can serve as a significant economic driver, generating sustainable employment, increasing local incomes, and promoting eco-friendly activities. Engaging



local residents in providing tourism services is essential to the long-term success of the area." Regarding the necessary infrastructure, he emphasized that improving access routes, establishing basic tourism facilities, organizing natural spaces, installing signage, and enhancing visitor safety are key measures to elevate the overall tourism experience in the region.

Nosrati also stressed the importance of scientific and targeted promotion: "Introducing Moganshahi and Fanuj Gorge through specialized tourism programs and leveraging media channels will play a crucial role in raising awareness among domestic tourists and could lead to longer stays in Fanuj." According to tourism experts, the Moganshahi tourism area, with its unspoiled landscapes, ecological diversity, and potential to integrate with other attractions in Fanuj, has the capacity to become one of the major nature tourism hubs in southern Sistan and Baluchestan in the future. With proper planning, sustainable management, and targeted investment, the region could make a substantial contribution to balanced and responsible tourism development.

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## Chalab village is center of history, agriculture, traditional arts

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Chalab, a village in Ilam Province, is a unique place where history, nature, and culture are deeply intertwined. From ancient qanats and fertile lands to handicrafts and relics of the Sacred Defense, the village reflects a rich and multifaceted heritage. According to Dehkhoda's dictionary, "Chalab" refers to a hollow where rainwater or floodwater accumulates. The village was named Chalab due to the presence of qanat wells in the heart of Mehran's arid landscape. To the north lies a centuries-old nomadic station, further emphasizing the region's historical significance.

Omid Esmaeli, an expert at the Ilam Province Governorate, told ISNA that while there are no definitive historical records documenting the village's origin, it is believed to be ancient. Settlers were drawn to the area due to the presence of a river, which provided vital water resources for agriculture and daily life.



Esmaeli explained that during the Iran-Iraq War, Chalab was occupied by the Ba'athist Iraqi regime. Forty-five families from the village sacrificed forty-five martyrs, earning Chalab a distinguished place in the history of the Sacred Defense. He added that the nearest residential areas are Eslamiyeh Town, located 20 kilometers away, and Mehran, 27 kilometers distant. Esmaeli emphasized that Chalab serves as the administrative center for the Chalab and Changole rural districts, providing essential services to surrounding villages.

The village's agricultural water is sourced from the river and local wells, but in recent years, drought has caused water shortages. Currently, four wells with a combined flow of 44 liters per second are used to irrigate 104 hectares of farmland,



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while the village's total land spans 7,397 hectares. Due to the lack of suitable slopes in the village pathways, surface water from rainfall is directed to streams and rivers, sometimes causing flooding. Livestock farming is the main occupation in Chalab. The village has 50 hectares of cultivated land, with 30% of residents engaged in animal husbandry, 12% in industry, and 58% in

the services sector. Crops include wheat and barley, and most trade is conducted with Mehran. The village's economic potential includes dairy and meat cattle farming, ostrich and turkey rearing, sheep and goat husbandry, poultry incubation, edible mushroom cultivation, medicinal plant farming, and the cultivation of narcissus flowers. Farzad Sharifi, Director General of Ilam's Cultural Heritage,

Tourism, and Handicrafts Organization, told ISNA that Chalab's artisanal and service capacities include felt-making, carpet weaving, floral arts, marquetry, yarn weaving, and chintz weaving. With a long-standing tradition, the village has actively preserved its handicrafts and traditional arts over generations. Today, many residents combine rural life with handicraft production, bringing their creations to market with dedication and enthusiasm.

Sharifi noted that Chalab is one of Ilam Province's most active villages in the realm of traditional arts and handicrafts. Felt-making and crochet remain prevalent, with felt products traditionally used as floor coverings, along with felt coats and hats produced at the village's sole felt workshop. He added that investing in Chalab's handicrafts could serve as an effective strategy for poverty alleviation and regional development in this historically significant area.

## Exploring Sheikh Shahabeddin's mausoleum in Ahar

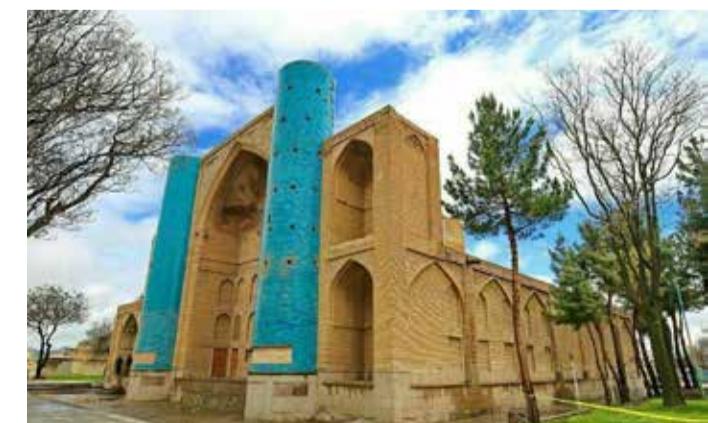
## Iranica Desk

Sheikh Shahabeddin Mahmood Ahari was a renowned mystic and scholar of the 7th and 8th centuries, and this mausoleum was constructed over his grave long after his death. According to existing sources, the construction of the mausoleum in Ahar, East Azarbaijan Province, is attributed to the Safavid monarch Shah Abbas I, while the raw brick enclosure surrounding it is credited to Amir-Taymur Gurkan. The building underwent restoration near the end of the 12th century under the supervision of Mostafa Qol Khan, the governor of the region.

The author of Asar-e-Bastani-e Azerbajan identifies Sheikh Shahabeddin as a descendant of Sheikh Shahabeddin Sohrevardi. He further notes that Sheikh Shahabeddin served as the spiritual master of Seyed Jamaleddin Tabrizi. The current structure of the mausoleum is generally attributed to the Safavid period, although some experts believe that certain parts, such as the stone enclosure of the tomb and the eastern entrance, may date back to pre-Safavid times. The main Ivan of the mausoleum is flanked by a pair of massive minarets, which are not taller than the Ivan itself. It is suggested that the construc-

tion of these minarets might have been left unfinished or that their upper sections were destroyed at a later period. In 1898 CE, portions of the mausoleum underwent restoration, and the surrounding lands were converted into a public park, which continues to serve as a recreational area to this day. Ahar itself is one of the oldest cities in East Azarbaijan, with a history that stretches back to ancient times, including pre-Islamic periods. The city has historically served as an important administrative and cultural center due to its strategic location on trade routes connecting the Caucasus, Iran,

and beyond. Over the centuries, Ahar witnessed numerous invasions and political changes, from local dynasties to the Mongol and Timurid periods, which left their mark on the city's architecture and cultural heritage. The region around Ahar has long been known for its agricultural richness, particularly in grains, fruits, and livestock, supporting both local communities and trade networks. Additionally, the city developed as a center of learning, attracting scholars, poets, and mystics like Sheikh Shahabeddin Mahmood Ahari. Its historical mosques, mausoleums, and caravanserais reflect the



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city's enduring spiritual and commercial significance. Today, Ahar remains a symbol of the region's layered history, combining cultural, spiritual, and historical importance that continues to draw visitors and researchers alike.