

# Fars Province attracts over 23,000 foreign tourists

## Iranica Desk

A total of 23,319 foreign tourists visited Fars Province during the first half of the current Iranian year (March 21–September 21), according to Heydarali Zahedian, Deputy Head of Fars Province's Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization. He noted that although Fars hosted tourists from a wide range of countries, the largest numbers came from Russia, China, France, Germany, and Austria, IRNA wrote. Zahedian said that visits to the tombs of Hafez and Sa'di, the

UNESCO-listed sites of Persepolis and Pasargadae, Eram Garden, the Sassanid Archaeological Landscape, and other cultural heritage attractions in Fars were included in the itineraries of foreign tourists. Referring to the importance of increasing the number of foreign visitors to boost tourism in the province, he added that meetings have been held with inbound tour operators to review and discuss strategies for attracting more tourists in line with current conditions. Zahedian stated that one of the key strategies for at-

tracting tourists is hosting foreign familiarization tours (FAM tours) to introduce the province's tourism potential and highlight the positive features of traveling to Fars. Emphasizing the effectiveness of FAM tours in attracting foreign tourists, he said that tour operators are focusing on organizing such tours and are currently holding consultations and negotiations with groups from various countries. He announced that negotiations for the presence of two companies in the province have so far been finalized,

and around 20 foreign tourism professionals are expected to visit Fars. With 13 UNESCO World Heritage sites — including the Sassanid Archaeological Landscape, the World Heritage sites of Persepolis and Pasargadae, Eram Botanical Garden, and Izadkhist Caravanserai — Fars Province has consistently remained one of the main destinations for foreign tourists traveling to Iran. In addition, Shiraz's high capacity in health tourism has made the city a host to foreign travelers from neighboring countries.



● IRNA

# Uzbek Hill moves toward world heritage registration

## Iranica Desk

The head of the Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Department of Nazarabad in Alborz Province, Ehsan Belali, said that the historic Uzbek Hill, due to its unique archaeological and cultural values, has been placed on the list of sites eligible for World Heritage registration. Accordingly, plans are underway to launch a comprehensive research project aimed at documentation, principled conservation, scientific restoration, and the development of sustainable tourism at the site. Emphasizing the special status of Uzbek Hill in the



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region's history, Belali stated that the site is one of the most important and prominent archaeological locations in the region. He noted that its valuable layers contain rare information about the process of civi-

lization formation in this part of the Iranian Plateau. "Therefore, the protection and proper preservation of this site is not merely an administrative or local duty, but a national and intergenerational respon-

sibility," he said.

Referring to measures taken in recent years, Belali added that, with the continuous cooperation of national and provincial experts and specialized forces, several restoration projects have been implemented to stabilize structures, prevent erosion, and ensure the physical protection of the site. Alongside these efforts, regular site cleaning, organization of access routes, control of human-induced damage, and proper information dissemination to visitors have also been seriously pursued.

He continued that the department's approach is to define Uzbek Hill not only

as a protected area, but also as a safe, standard, and accessible site for researchers, students, and domestic and foreign tourists. "Achieving this goal requires striking a balance between scientific conservation and cultural and tourism-oriented utilization," he said. Highlighting the importance of public participation in safeguarding historical monuments, Belali stressed that experience has shown no conservation program can succeed sustainably without the cooperation of the local community.

"From the outset, we have sought to engage local residents as the primary

guardians of this valuable heritage," he said, noting that educational sessions, workshops introducing the historical significance of the hill, and community participation in managing visitor routes have been among the measures taken to strengthen social synergy.

Belali also underscored the high tourism potential of Uzbek Hill, saying the archaeological site has the capacity to become one of the major cultural tourism destinations at both national and even international levels. He explained that plans focus on developing minimal yet targeted tourism infrastructure, providing accu-

rate historical and cultural content, and creating an educational and engaging experience for visitors, while fully adhering to conservation regulations and standards to ensure the site is preserved for future generations. He said that thanks to the continuous follow-up by the provincial Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization and the support of the Nazarabad governor, the site is now on the path toward global registration. "This development is clear evidence of the national and international significance of Uzbek Hill and its special place in archaeological studies," he said.

## Reading Room

# Tabriz preserves its legacy of books, knowledge

## Iranica Desk

From ancient times, Tabriz has been known as a city of culture and books — whether in the distant past, when the Rabe' Rashidi complex with its invaluable library was considered the most renowned academic center in the world, or later, when the Nakhjavani brothers laid the foundations for establishing Iran's first modern-generation library in this city.

However, in the early 1980s, following extremism and several tragic events, the city's National Library — along with its unique hall and building — was demolished. Its collection was transferred to a corner of an old building in Golestan Garden, and for a full twenty years, a cloud of regret and distrust settled over one of the world's most important libraries.

These events damaged the national and international identity of the Tabriz Library, diminished public interest in the city's central library, and plunged the Tabriz National Library into a state of stagnation for three decades, according to IBNA. Nevertheless, following the construction of the grand building of the Tabriz National Library — with a built area of 10,000 square meters and a total site area of more than three hectares — the people of Tabriz have once again reconciled



with the tradition of donating books, and this institution has regained its national standing. The library, as one of the oldest in the country, was founded in 1956 following the endowment of a remarkable private library by two enlightened and charitable Tabriz merchants, Haj Hossein and Haj Mohammad Nakhjavani.

Over the past century, following the Constitutional Movement and the rise of public awareness and enlightenment, the movement to endow private libraries in this region gained increasing momentum. As a result, since 1956, 850 culture-loving benefactors have donated more than 40,000 rare and valuable books to the National Library of Tabriz. More than 90 percent of the library's unique manuscript

collection has been donated by the public, 95 percent of which has been converted into microfilm and made available to researchers.

By donating more than 6,000 rare handwritten manuscripts and old lithographic and lead-printed books, the Nakhjavani brothers laid the foundation of this collection and pioneered a path that made Tabriz famous as a city of book donation.

Hossein Masoumi Hamedani, professor of history and philosophy and a permanent member of the Academy of Persian Language and Literature, stated during a visit to the Central Library of Tabriz, "Without a doubt, this unique collection is one of the cultural pillars of the ancient city of Tabriz." Praising the role of the Nakh-



● IBNA

javani brothers as merchants who, alongside their economic activities, were deeply interested in culture and art, he emphasized: "We must promote this valuable culture among merchants and economic activists."

Masoumi added that today, due to the neglect of some valuable traditions of the past, it is increasingly rare to find a businessperson who is committed to preserving culture and art and leaving behind such a legacy.

Asad Babaei, Director General of East Azarbaijan Province's Libraries, referring to the treasure of valuable works housed in this collection, said: "Currently, 400,000 volumes of books in eight different languages are preserved here, including 3,429 manuscripts,

5,746 lithographic prints, and 3,094 old lead-printed books." He noted that the catalog of the Tabriz National Library includes 10 manuscripts that are extremely rare worldwide.

The precious book "The Bible of the Apostles" is the oldest manuscript preserved in the manuscript section of the Tabriz Central Library. It is written on fish skin, in the Syriac (Assyrian) language, using a script considered among the world's semi-living scripts.

Another outstanding work preserved in the manuscript section of the library is Rabe' Rashidi's Endowment, written by Khajeh Rashid al-Din Fazlollah Hamedani. This work is over 700 years old and documents the endowment of properties and assets donated by Khajeh Rashid al-Din to Rabe'

Rashidi. The paper used in this manuscript is of the Khan-Baliq type, which was commonly used during that period. The is Rabe' Rashidi's Endowment was registered in UNESCO's Memory of the World Register in 2007.

Asad Babaei, Director General of East Azarbaijan Province's Libraries, also announced the launch of new sections within the complex, stating that in line with the growth of modern technologies, a special youth section focusing on astronomy and galaxies — with convex mirrors — chemistry, anatomy, and more has been established in an area of nearly 400 square meters. Around 5,000 adolescents from Tabriz have become members of this section.

He further reported the establishment of a mother-and-child section within the complex, noting that this 380-square-meter space includes play and recreational equipment, books, and storytelling programs. Approximately 5,000 children, accompanied by their mothers, use the services of the Central Library of Tabriz in this section.

Babaei added that a web-based training room, communication science education, and English language instruction are among the other newly established sections of the Central Library of Tabriz.