

War takes toll on historic landmarks in Tabriz, Maragheh

Iranica Desk

Following the latest wave of strikes, damage has extended into Iran's cultural heritage sector, with a number of historical sites affected. Preliminary reports indicate that 149 heritage sites across 20 provinces have sustained damage, highlighting the scale of threats facing the country's historical assets. East Azarbaijan Province has not been spared, with both the Measurement Museum (Salmasi House) in Tabriz and the Blue Dome of Maragheh among the impacted landmarks.

The deputy head of East Azarbaijan Province's Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Department has outlined the extent of damage inflicted on the two sites during recent military attacks by the US and



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Israel on Iran. Vahid Navadad told ISNA that assessments of the damage are ongoing. He explained that in the early days of the attacks —

around March 9, 2026 — simultaneous airstrikes by Israeli and US forces on the cities of Maragheh and Tabriz caused blast waves that resulted in minor

damage to the two historical structures.

"One of the affected buildings is the historic Salmasi House (Measurement Museum) in Tabriz,

which sustained damage to various sections," he said. "In addition, the highly valuable orosi windows — an essential architectural feature and a key element of the building's identity — were also damaged."

Regarding the Blue Dome of Maragheh, Navadad noted that parts of the structure's decorative elements were affected, with some sections detaching from the body of the monument and falling to the ground.

He added that the provincial Cultural Heritage Department promptly prepared an initial report and carried out documentation in the early days following the incident. As a first step toward restoration, specialized studies are now underway by qualified consultants, including academic and technical experts,

to determine appropriate intervention methods.

"For the Salmasi House, these studies are being conducted using scientific and research-based approaches, incorporating modern reinforcement techniques," Navadad said. "The building is being modeled to help define precise restoration and structural strengthening methods."

Similar conservation and restoration studies have begun on the Blue Dome's decorative elements and are currently in progress. Once these studies are completed, their findings will be reviewed by the provincial Cultural Heritage Technical Council. Pending approval and allocation of the necessary funding, restoration work will begin.

Navadad concluded that preliminary field inspections have provided an initial estimate of the damage, with a final assessment to be announced after the completion of detailed studies and the determination of intervention strategies.

Saheb Divani Tomb at Hafezieh to undergo restoration

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Shiraz — widely known as the city of poetry and literature — annually welcomes millions of visitors who travel to pay tribute to the renowned Persian poet Hafez at his tomb in the Hafezieh complex. In addition to the main mausoleum, the historic site includes several lesser-known sections, each representing a valuable part of Iran's architectural and cultural heritage.

Over the decades, exposure to environmental factors such as rain, humidity, and direct sunlight has caused significant deterioration. Cracks in the walls, eroded brickwork, and damage to plaster decorations and traditional Yazdi-Bandi elements are among the visible signs of

decay. Inadequate insulation has further increased the risk of moisture infiltration, posing a serious threat to the building's structural stability. Experts warn that neglecting such sites could result in the gradual loss of important layers of Shiraz's architectural and cultural identity.

Against this backdrop, the launch of restoration work has been welcomed as a positive development. Sadegh Zarei, Deputy Head of Fars Province's Cultural Heritage Tourism and Handicrafts Organization, announced that the Saheb-Divani Tomb will undergo restoration. He described the project as an important step toward preserving and revitalizing a valuable yet underappreciated part of the Hafezieh Complex. The initiative

aims to address damage caused by time and environmental conditions, with restoration plans developed accordingly.

"The ultimate goal of this project is to restore the authenticity and former grandeur of this section of Hafezieh," he said, adding that the site will be preserved both as a historical monument and as a cultural space for researchers and visitors.

Officials say the restoration will also help redefine Hafezieh as a comprehensive cultural hub. Improvements to the entrance and surrounding areas are expected to symbolically reconnect the administrative architectural heritage of the past with the spiritual atmosphere of Hafez's tomb. Such efforts, they note, will

deepen visitors' engagement with the site's historical and literary layers, transforming a simple visit into a more meaningful cultural and intellectual experience.

In recent years, the Saheb-Divani Tomb has functioned as a specialized Hafez Studies Center. Its restoration is therefore expected to have a direct impact on the quality of literary research in Shiraz. A safer, restored environment will facilitate academic gatherings, exhibitions of manuscripts, and improved access to research materials.

Previously, the building's deteriorating condition had discouraged prolonged use by researchers and at times posed safety risks for group activities.



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With planned structural reinforcement and improved moisture insulation, these obstacles are expected to be removed,

enabling the Hafez Studies Center to play a more active role in promoting the poet's works and thought.

Caracal embodies Iran's untouched desert beauty

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The Caracal Desert in Yazd Province is among Iran's most beautiful and least explored desert regions, offering golden sand dunes, peaceful silence, and a star-filled night sky that together create a unique experience for visitors. The desert provides an escape from urban life, allowing travelers to experience true tranquility and a closer connection with nature. Walking on warm sands, watching sunrise and sunset, and spending the night in the desert's silence create lasting memories. This report highlights the natural beauty, activities, and local culture of the Caracal Desert in an accessible and engaging way.

The desert's soft, wave-like sand dunes are one of its main attractions. At sunrise, gentle morning light falls across the dunes, forming striking shadows and patterns across the sand. At sunset, the landscape turns into a dreamlike scene, with golden, orange, and red tones spreading across the horizon. At night, the clear sky reveals countless stars, creating a calm and extraordinary atmosphere. Visitors can hear the wind and shifting sand, experiencing a sense of timelessness and absolute silence rarely

found in urban environments. Sparse vegetation and small desert animals such as lizards and local birds contribute to the area's untouched ecosystem, while animal footprints on the sand add to the sense of natural discovery.



and desert mice. Birdlife is also significant, with falcons, local eagles, and other species of dry and semi-dry habitats commonly observed. Despite harsh conditions, the vegetation is diverse and resilient, making the desert an important destination for na-



The name Caracal Desert is derived from the caracal, a rare wild cat species once believed to inhabit the region. Also known locally as the lynx-like wild cat, the caracal is a fast and elusive predator. Although sightings are rare today, the name has given the desert a distinct identity and increased interest among travelers.

The Caracal Desert is also a unique habitat for species adapted to arid environments. Mammals in the region include the caracal cat, desert foxes, small wolves, desert squirrels,

and desert mice. Birdlife is also significant, with falcons, local eagles, and other species of dry and semi-dry habitats commonly observed. Despite harsh conditions, the vegetation is diverse and resilient, making the desert an important destination for na-

ture lovers and environmental enthusiasts. Travel to the Caracal Desert also offers an opportunity to experience local culture and lifestyle. The hospitality of local communities, traditional foods, and handicrafts enrich the journey. Visitors can observe carpet weaving, traditional bread baking, and the production of local products such as dates and natural honey, and in some cases take part in these activities. These experiences not only enhance tourism but also support local

livelihoods and help preserve cultural traditions.

The desert offers a variety of recreational activities. Camel riding provides a traditional and peaceful way to explore the landscape. Desert safaris and off-road driving with 4x4 vehi-



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cles offer adventure and excitement, while sandboarding adds a sporting element to the dunes. Camping overnight in the desert allows visitors to experience the star-filled sky and complete silence. Photography enthusiasts can capture unforgettable moments of sunrise, sunset, and night skies. Some local tours also offer astronomy sessions and introductions to desert wildlife and plants.

Several attractions surround the Caracal Desert, enriching the overall travel experience. The nearby city of Bafq is the

closest urban center, offering accommodation and local markets. The historic city of Yazd, located about 110 kilometers away, provides rich cultural and historical attractions. Surrounding villages near Bafq allow visitors to experience traditional

sufficient water, appropriate clothing and footwear, sunscreen, sunglasses, and essential travel gear.

To preserve the desert's beauty and ensure safety, visitors are encouraged not to leave waste behind, to stay on designated paths, avoid loud activities, use certified local guides, and respect local wildlife and vegetation. Campfires should be carefully controlled, and artificial lighting kept to a minimum to protect the desert's natural silence and ecosystem. These practices ensure a safe and memorable experience for all visitors.

Supporting local communities through purchasing handicrafts, hiring local guides, and staying in eco-lodges helps sustain the region's economy and cultural heritage. Participation in cultural activities such as traditional cooking or music further enriches the travel experience.

With its stunning landscapes, unique wildlife, starry skies, diverse activities, and rich local culture, the Caracal Desert stands out as an exceptional destination for travelers seeking nature, adventure, and tranquility in Iran. Responsible tourism ensures that its natural and cultural beauty is preserved for future generations.