

Mashhad enters race for OIC City of Tourism for 2030

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran has nominated the northeastern pilgrimage metropolis of Mashhad as its candidate for the Organization of Islamic Cooperation's 2030 "City of Tourism" title, Deputy Tourism Minister Anoushirvan Mohseni-Bandpey said, positioning the holy city to expand its international cultural footprint across the Muslim world. The nomination, approved after technical assessments by the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, places Mashhad among prospective contenders expected to compete for one of the Islamic world's highest-profile tourism distinctions, according to IRNA. The final selection process will move

forward at an expert-level review session in Tashkent in May before tourism ministers from OIC member states convene in Doha later this year to announce the winning city. Home to the shrine of Imam Reza (PBUH), Mashhad stands as one of the region's largest religious tourism hubs, drawing millions of pilgrims and travelers annually from across West Asia, Central Asia, the Persian Gulf, and the wider Islamic world. Iranian tourism authorities say the city's extensive hospitality infrastructure, expanding urban transit network, and growing health tourism sector strengthened its candidacy. Officials view the nomination as a strategic opening to deepen cultural diplomacy, showcase Iran's historical

and religious heritage, and channel fresh investment into tourism facilities in the country's east. Iran previously secured the title in 2018 with the northwestern city of Tabriz, which hosted dozens of international cultural gatherings and tourism events under the "Tabriz 2018" initiative. The program remains one of Tehran's most prominent experiences in multilateral Islamic tourism cooperation. The OIC tourism designation, formerly known as the "Capital of Islamic Tourism," has in recent years spotlighted cities such as Konya, Medina, Bukhara, Cairo, Dakar, and Lahore, featuring the initiative's growing international visibility across the Muslim world.



Iran maps out post-war tourism surge with hotels, airlines push

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Iran is preparing a broad post-war expansion of its tourism industry through new infrastructure, hotel capacity, airline development and international promotional campaigns, Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Minister Reza Salehi-Amiri said on Sunday.

Speaking at the ministry's seasonal conference in Tehran, Salehi-Amiri said authorities were drafting multiple support packages for tourism operators as the country seeks to position the sector for a "post-war leap" after months of regional turbulence and security pressures, according to IRNA.

"The tourism industry must be prepared for a major jump in the post-war period," he said, adding that plans were underway to expand accommodation networks, strengthen aviation services, boost cultural content production and roll out international advertising initiatives aimed at reviving inbound travel.

The minister said the support measures were being coordinated with parliament, the Economy Ministry, the Plan and Budget Organization and other state bodies, with details expected to be unveiled soon. Iran's tourism authorities are seeking



to capitalize on renewed regional attention toward the country's historical and cultural assets after what officials described as heightened international solidarity over damage inflicted on heritage sites during recent conflict.

Salehi-Amiri said 149 historical sites across 20 provinces sustained damage during the US-Israeli strikes against Iran which began February 28, prompting domestic and international campaigns in support of protecting Iran's ancient cultural legacy. He said global reactions had underscored the significance of Iranian civilization and the need to preserve its heritage.

Despite wartime disruption, the minister portrayed the recent period as a test of national resilience that reinforced social cohesion and public engagement. He pointed to large public gatherings during memorial ceremonies for those killed in the conflict as evidence



Iran's Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Minister Reza Salehi-Amiri speaks at a ministry's seasonal conference in Tehran on May 10, 2026. ● CHTN

of what he called a strengthened collective identity.

The government is now attempting to channel that atmosphere into economic recovery sectors including tourism, one of Iran's most employment-intensive industries.

Salehi-Amiri said preserving public confidence and improving governance efficiency would remain essential in the reconstruction phase, citing transportation, housing, energy and public services as priorities alongside cultural development.

Iran, home to UNESCO-listed landmarks stretching from Persepolis to Isfahan, has increasingly promoted cultural diplomacy and regional tourism cooperation as part of efforts to widen its international tourism footprint.

TMoCA to unveil Picasso-led Spanish modernist showcase in 'Art & War' series

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Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art (TMoCA) will open a new chapter of its 'Art & War' program on May 11, featuring 11 works by leading Spanish modernist painters including Pablo Picasso, Antoni Tàpies, Robert Motherwell and Juan Gris, as the capital's premier museum expands its internationally focused examination of war's imprint on modern art.

The exhibition, titled 'Eleven Artworks by Spanish Modernist Painters,' runs from May 11 to May 19 at the museum's main hall and draws exclusively from TMoCA's celebrated collection, one of the most significant repositories of Western modern art outside Europe and North America.

The showcase revisits how conflict, political turbulence and social upheaval reverberated through

20th-century Spanish art, bringing together works associated with Cubism, abstraction and postwar modernism. Museum organizers said the exhibition seeks to deepen public engagement with the visual language artists employed to confront war, displacement and historical rupture.

The event follows the opening phase of TMoCA's broader 'Art & War' initiative, which previously highlighted works by major international pop art figures including Roy Lichtenstein, Robert Indiana and James Rosenquist from May 3 to 10.

That exhibition explored art's "reflective" and "resistant" role during periods of global conflict and drew attention to the museum's expanding international cultural outreach.

By turning the spotlight onto Spanish modernism, the latest installment widens the historical and geograph-



ical scope of the series while reinforcing Tehran's role as a regional platform for cross-cultural artistic dialogue.

Tehran, Mexico City forge cultural bridge with Cyrus-inspired plaque

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Iran and Mexico marked a rare cultural milestone in the central Mexican city of Abasolo, birthplace of independence leader Miguel Hidalgo, where diplomats, lawmakers and academics unveiled a commemorative plaque inspired by the ancient Cyrus Cylinder, highlighting shared ideals of sovereignty, justice and cultural identity.

Held on May 8 at Abasolo's historical museum on the anniversary of Miguel Hidalgo's birth, the event drew nearly 300 political, diplomatic and cultural figures, including members of Mexico's Senate and federal Congress, local Guanajuato officials, representatives of the ruling Morena party and Cuba's deputy ambassador to Mexico, IRNA reported.

The plaque, presented as a symbol of civilizational dialogue between Iran and Mex-

ico, carries part of a message attributed to Cyrus the Great on freedom and human dignity.

"Human beings are free to live and work in any land, provided that they do not violate the rights of others," the inscription reads.

Participants described the ceremony as a "historic" step toward deepening cultural ties between two nations shaped by strong traditions of independence and national dignity. Addressing the gathering, Iran's Ambassador to Mexico Abolfazl Pasandideh drew parallels between Mexico's independence movement and Iran's 1979 Islamic Revolution, saying both nations share historical memories of resisting foreign domination and safeguarding national identity.

He also highlighted the role of religious leadership in transformative moments of history, comparing Hidalgo, the Catholic priest who became a sym-



bol of Mexican independence, with Imam Khomeini, founder of the Islamic Republic. The ambassador said today's world needs stronger dialogue among nations, mutual respect and cultural cooperation, adding that Iran and Mexico, as two ancient civilizations, can help advance peace and understanding across regions.

The ceremony was repeatedly met with applause, with attendees calling it one of Guanajuato's most distinctive recent cultural initiatives



Iran's Ambassador to Mexico Abolfazl Pasandideh (L) shakes hands with Job Eduardo Gallardo Santellano, Municipal President of Abasolo, Guanajuato, during a ceremony in Abasolo, Guanajuato, on May 8, 2026, to unveil a commemorative plaque inspired by the Cyrus Cylinder, symbolizing a new cultural bridge between the two nations. ● IRNA

linking Iran's name with concepts of freedom, dignity and intercultural dialogue in the hometown of Mexico's independence hero.