

# Train passes through history in Savadkuh



## Iranica Desk

Savadkuh is a museum — a museum without walls, where the sky serves as its roof and its treasures include historic bridges and trees that are millions of years old. It is a museum that moves slowly, allowing visitors to observe every detail through a train window and offering a perspective unlike anything seen in photographs.

The train glides gently across the bridge. Below, a narrow and deep valley stretches out, with a small stream flowing 110 meters beneath the bridge. A few people stand below, watching the structure above. This is a bridge many have seen countless times in photographs, according to Mehr News Agency.

Perhaps you have pointed at it from a distance while traveling along the Tehran–North transit road, or stopped briefly to take a souvenir photo. But here, the story is different. The train passes through a place that no asphalt road can reach. This is above the Veresk Bridge — a place suspended between sky and earth.

For nearly a century, a living mu-

seum has existed here. Alongside the Veresk Bridge are the Shurab Railway Station with its colorful spring, the brick-arched Doab Bridge, the Se Khat Tala (Three Golden Lines) railway section — where the railway passes through the same area three times at different elevations — and a small workers' church, so tiny that some consider it one of the smallest churches in the world.

These are the historical sections of this museum: structures that still stand and continue to carry movement and life. Every bridge, station, and structure along this railway route represents a lasting identity.

The head of the Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization of Savadkuh, Mohsen Nejad-Ebrahim, said that 23 bridges along this route have been registered as national heritage sites. Among the most notable are the Shurab Bridge, Veresk Bridge, Urim Bridge, and Kalantari Doab Bridge.

He added that, in addition to these sites, the Shurab Waterfall has also been registered as a national natural heritage site. These attractions,

he said, appeal to tourists both through railway tourism trips and independent travel.

Referring to the registration of Iran's Trans-Iranian Railway on UNESCO's World Heritage List in 2021, Nejad-Ebrahim described the event as an opportunity for better protection of historical structures and for introducing the tourism potential of the route at both national and international levels.

He added that the attractions of Savadkuh's railway route are not limited to bridges and historic structures. During the first half of the year, the landscapes of rice fields and traditional rice planting and harvesting methods can also become part of the railway tourism experience.

According to him, stopping the Tehran-North tourist train at Shurab village and setting up a temporary local market could provide an opportunity to introduce handicrafts, local food, and other attractions of the county while allowing visitors to purchase local products. Such an opportunity, he said, could encourage tourists to return to Savadkuh for independent trips,

giving them more time than a single-day train journey to see and experience each of these historic sites.

Highlighting Savadkuh's extensive potential along this railway route, he said that despite the route being located within the county's territory, no specific role has yet been defined for Savadkuh in railway tourism programs. For this reason, the county's cultural heritage authorities are seeking a stronger role in introducing, managing, and organizing this tourism potential. The natural section of this museum is the railway itself: tracks that climb and descend along mountain slopes and deep valleys, creating Se-Khat Tala before continuing through the winding paths of the Hyrcanian forests.

These two steel lines pass through forests containing trees millions of years old. At times, the tracks come so close to tree trunks that branches cast shadows over the rails, and at other times they disappear into the fog, as if leading into another world.

This coexistence of railway, mountains, and forests has turned the Savadkuh railway route into a popular destination for tourists and photographers.

Visitors preserve the beauty of this place through photographs, while photographers spend hours waiting for the perfect combination of light, movement, and stillness. The result is thousands of images of rails cutting through forests, bridges, and mountains, now widely shared on social media.

The region's beauty — from rocky landscapes to deep valleys — provides a unique subject for photography. These are the words of Hassan Issapour, a photographer with 15 years of experience, who describes the Savadkuh railway route as an exceptional example of the remarkable combination of na-

ture and human-made structures. However, the route is not without risks. According to him, unsafe proximity to moving trains and the possibility of falling from heights are among the serious dangers photographers face in the area. Issapour said that many enthusiasts come to this route for photography, but many are unaware of the dangers. The narrow width of the railway path and the lack of information about train schedules can unintentionally expose people to irreversible accidents and require serious attention from authorities.

Another photographer, Eshqali Iranmanesh, who has photographed this historic and natural museum many times during his 37-year photography career, shared his experience.

He said capturing an ideal frame requires hours of waiting and careful planning. To capture a memorable image, especially in locations such as Se-Khat Tala and Veresk Bridge, the first and most important factor is suitable lighting — including the time of day and the exact moment when passenger or freight trains pass through the route.

Iranmanesh said that the presence of old railway stations, tracks running through forests, tunnels, and historic bridges has created a breathtaking landscape — a harmony between human engineering

and nature. The railway, he added, appears to have become part of the region's nature and identity, not only failing to diminish the scenery but actually adding to its appeal.

He described the combination of railway tracks, the international road, river, forest, mountains, rice fields, and more than 30 bridges as an extraordinary scene, especially visible through aerial photography. According to him, this unique combination has made the Savadkuh railway route highly attractive for photographers, tourists, and even first-time visitors, creating a memorable experience.

The photographer added that in autumn and winter, the warm colors of the forest, floating fog in the valleys, rain, and snow give the route a dreamlike and poetic atmosphere. However, many tourists and photographers believe that the Savadkuh railway route has its own unique beauty in all four seasons, offering a new frame to capture and preserve every time.

Perhaps that is why this museum never becomes repetitive — not for photographers, not for tourists, and not for anyone watching this moving landscape from a train window. The rails pass over bridges and mountains and continue through the Hyrcanian forests; an extension of history, engineering, and nature that together have created a unique museum.



## Expert warns of deteriorating condition of historic Qadamgah site

### Iranica Desk

A heritage conservation specialist has raised concerns over the deteriorating condition of the historic site of Qadamgah, calling on cultural heritage authorities to take serious action to protect this valuable monument. The expert emphasized that the historic structure continues to suffer from a lack of proper maintenance and effective conservation measures.

Qadamgah, regarded as one of the most valuable historical and cultural landmarks in Fars Province, has been in poor condition for years. Despite repeated warnings from experts, heritage enthusiasts, and numerous me-

dia reports, the monument has yet to receive adequate attention or comprehensive conservation efforts, according to ISNA.

More concerning than the natural deterioration of the structure itself, experts say, is the continued lack of action by officials who are legally responsible for safeguarding the country's historical heritage. In recent years, the monument's critical condition has been reported several times, but no significant measures have been taken to address existing problems or implement a comprehensive preservation and restoration plan.

Earlier ISNA examined the condition of Qadamgah from various perspectives, highlight-

ing issues including vandalism, neglect, and the inappropriate use of parts of the stone structure as makeshift stoves or fire sites. Such incidents have intensified concerns over the continued erosion and damage to the monument.

The reports also noted that Behzad Moridi, the former Director General of the Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization of Fars Province, had visited the site and announced the beginning of restoration efforts at the time. However, despite the passage of time, the monument's current condition remains far from satisfactory.

Heritage conservation specialist Mostafa Rakhshandeh-Kho said that Qadamgah has been facing unfavorable conditions for years and has remained deprived of proper care and effective protective measures despite repeated warnings by experts and media coverage.

Rakhshandeh-Kho said that the continuation of official neglect is more alarming than the physical deterioration of the monument itself. He questioned why, despite repeated emphasis on the importance of protecting cultural heritage, Qadamgah has still not become an operational priority.

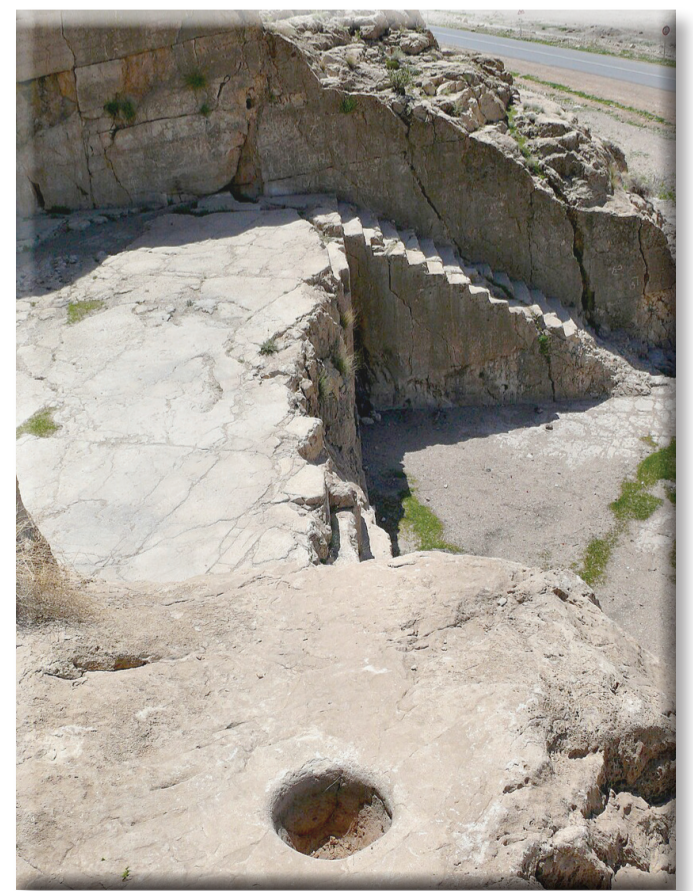
He also questioned why the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tour-

ism and Handicrafts and the Fars Province Cultural Heritage Department have not provided clear answers regarding their conservation plans for the site.

The conservation expert added that the Minister of Cultural Heritage and the Director General of the Cultural Heritage Organization of Fars Province, as the highest authorities responsible for heritage protection at the national and provincial levels, are accountable for the condition of historical sites under their supervision. He said the public has the right to know what steps have been taken to save the monument and what plans exist to prevent further deterioration.

Rakhshandeh-Kho stressed that Qadamgah now needs urgent attention, funding, and the launch of a professional restoration program. He warned that allowing the current situation to continue would not only lead to the gradual destruction of a historic monument but would also highlight the gap between heritage protection commitments and practical actions on the ground.

He expressed hope that, before the damage reaches an irreversible stage, responsible authorities would take field-based action, provide transparent responses, and implement effective measures to preserve and



restore the monument.

The current situation of Qadamgah reflects the continued deterioration of a valuable historical site due to insufficient attention and the absence of sustained and effective conser-

vation measures. Despite occasional visits and temporary initiatives, the issue remains unresolved and underscores the need for immediate, consistent, and results-oriented action by heritage authorities.

