

Kowkhdan's untapped tourism potential calls for coordinated action



● chn.ir

Iranica Desk

Just five kilometers north of Sisakht, the capital of Dena in Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad Province, lies a village that seems as though nature took its time crafting it with care. Kowkhdan sits amid the elevations of the southern Zagros Mountains, on slopes that lead to oak forests on one side and lush summer pastures on the other—landscapes that never tire the eye. Kowkhdan's summer air is cool and refreshing, the kind of climate that prompts weary city dwellers to spend hours on the road in search of relief from the heat. Spring arrives with wild blossoms and flowing streams. Autumn paints the landscape in shades of gold and orange, a spectacle rarely found elsewhere in the province. Winter brings snow and a deep tranquility that many urban visitors consider a luxury, according to chn.ir.

With its rich vegetation, abundant natural water resources, four-season scenery, and traditional mountain architecture, the village possesses all the characteristics of a genuine ecotourism destination. It is neither artificial nor developed solely for tourists; rather, it remains authentic and largely untouched.

Tourism stakeholders in the region said that Kowkhdan and the surrounding villages form a natural tourism corridor that could be developed into a multi-day itinerary for nature enthusiasts. Mountain hiking routes around Kowkhdan still require proper mapping and signage. Natural springs scattered across the slopes, suitable mountain camping areas, and access to climbing routes leading into the Dena highlands represent significant assets. If properly promoted through cooperation between cultural heritage authorities and related agencies, these attrac-

tions could establish the area as one of the province's leading ecotourism destinations. A local ecotourism guide said, "Whenever I bring groups here from other parts of the province or from outside the province, they all ask the same question: Why isn't this place better known? Why does nobody talk about it?" The answer, he said, is simple: "The infrastructure is incomplete, and there has been no coordinated effort to promote it." Kowkhdan has begun to gain a modest but genuine presence on social media. Photos shared by nature travelers have attracted positive reactions and sparked curiosity among potential visitors. Yet that growing interest highlights the need for improved access and infrastructure. Operators of eco-lodges in Sisakht said that many visitors who planned to explore Kowkhdan either changed their plans or left with a less-than-satisfactory experience because of the

condition of the access road. This indicates that tourists are willing to come, but the infrastructure is not yet fully prepared to receive them. The current condition of the road is largely the result of utility projects, including rural gas, water, and wastewater infrastructure works. While these projects have improved residents' quality of life and represent a positive development, the excavation work requires restoration and coordination to facilitate easier travel for both local residents and visitors. Residents emphasized that what is needed is not a new project, but the completion of work already underway. Cooperation among utility providers, municipal authorities, local government officials, and road maintenance agencies could transform the route into an all-season road. Another key project is the bridge serving Kowkhdan and neighboring villages, which has

been undergoing widening and rehabilitation for more than a year. Completing the bridge improvements would benefit not only tourists but also local residents, students, and patients who rely on it for daily travel. With effective coordination among contractors, local authorities, and oversight bodies, completion of the bridge project could significantly improve safety and facilitate year-round access to the village. What Kowkhdan needs extends beyond road repairs. The village requires a coordinated development strategy involving cultural heritage authorities, municipal officials, local administrators, and service agencies so that infrastructure improvements and destination promotion can advance simultaneously. Rural tourism development experts stressed that many lesser-known areas of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad Province do not require major investments; rather, they need effective inter-

agency coordination. A reliable road, tourism information signs, support for eco-lodge development, and promotion through tourism platforms may be all that is required to transform Kowkhdan from a little-known village into a recognized destination. The provincial Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Department also has an important role to play in this process — from mapping nature tourism routes and promoting the area through national events and platforms to supporting the establishment of eco-lodges. Such efforts are most effective when accompanied by the completion of essential infrastructure. The development of rural tourism is not the responsibility of a single institution. It is a shared responsibility. Kowkhdan presents an opportunity to demonstrate what can be achieved when government agencies and local stakeholders work together toward a common goal.

Zanjan recognized as global hub of filigree

Iranica Desk

The history of filigree metalwork (Malileh-Kari) dates back to 550-330 BCE, during the Achaemenid Empire, when goldsmiths and silversmiths devoted considerable attention to crafting finely decorated vessels and ornaments. Zanjan's filigree tradition is internationally recognized for its exceptional delicacy, craftsmanship, and historical authenticity. The city's designation as a "World City of Filigree" reflects its role as the primary center for the production and development of this art form, where quality standards in the craft are defined. Metalworking in Zanjan flourished during the Achaemenid, Parthian, and Sassanid periods. However, the documented history of filigree in the region becomes clearer from the 10th century CE onward, according to chn.ir. Because Zanjan's filigree products are made from precious metals such as gold and silver, many historical works were melted down over time for reuse of the raw material. As a result, relatively few examples from earlier periods — particularly before the Qajar era — have survived.



From the Qajar period, several filigree items remain, including hookah heads, trays, glass holders in various sizes, and jewelry such as necklaces, pendants, and earrings. Some of these works are preserved in domestic and international museums, while others remain in private collections. Historically, artisans created intricate and valuable works under difficult conditions, and modern filigree in Zanjan is indebted to these craftsmen, some of whom reportedly lost their eyesight due to the precision required in the work. Filigree in Zanjan consists of shaping extremely thin gold or silver wires into floral, geometric, and arabesque patterns, pro-



ducing lace-like metal structures of high artistic value. Zanjan has long been an important hub in Iran's cultural, eco-



● chn.ir

nomie, and craft history, serving as one of the country's key centers for traditional industries. While the art has ancient roots,

it reached maturity in Zanjan due to access to raw materials and the support of master craftsmen. Unlike conventional jewelry-making, filigree involves transforming metal into fine threads that are meticulously woven into decorative forms. Today, Zanjan hosts a wide network of active filigree workshops producing a wide range of products, from small items such as rings and earrings to larger works including ceremonial vessels and religious artworks. The master-apprentice system remains active, ensuring the transfer of knowledge to younger generations and preserving the craft's continuity. To promote the art form, symbolic initiatives have also been

implemented. A large decorative vase featuring filigree motifs has been installed in Zanjan's Sabzeh Meydan square, serving as a public representation of the city's heritage. Authorities also plan to donate valuable filigree works to museums in the near future, creating a comprehensive collection documenting the history and evolution of the craft for researchers and visitors. Due to rising gold prices, demand has shifted significantly toward silver filigree, leading to increased activity in silver-based production and a renewed focus on fine detailing. Current production is concentrated in two main categories: jewelry — including rings, earrings, and necklaces in both modern and traditional styles — and decorative vessels such as trays, vases, and ornamental objects that serve both aesthetic and investment purposes. With the expansion of global markets, Iranian filigree has gained international attention. Exhibitions and global craft festivals have provided artisans with opportunities to showcase their work and promote Iranian cultural heritage worldwide, contributing significantly to the preservation and global recognition of this traditional art.