

Chabahar moves toward becoming Iran’s year-round tourism hub



Martian Mountains
● snaptrip.com



Gulf of Oman coastline
● snaptrip.com



Lipar Lagoon
● snaptrip.com

Iranica Desk

At Iran’s southeastern edge, where the Mars-like mountains meet the endless blue waters of the sea and monsoon winds bring relief from the summer heat, the coastal city of Chabahar is emerging as a unique tourism destination shaped by nature, culture and climate. Located in Sistan and Baluchestan Province, Chabahar is more than a travel destination. It is a meeting point of the sea, mountains, wetlands, palm groves and the traditions of a community known for its hospitality. From the rocky shores of Beris to the pink waters of Lipar Lagoon, and from the dramatic landscapes of Makoran to the calm waters of the Gulf of Oman, the region offers visitors a diverse range of natural attractions, according to chtn.ir. With new investments in accommodation facilities, marine recreation, tourism projects and the promotion of its monsoon climate, Chabahar is entering a new

phase of development aimed at transforming the ocean port into a year-round destination for domestic and international visitors. Roozbeh Hassanpour, who is active in the tourism sector, said Chabahar represents more than a tourism location, describing it as a city where visitors can experience the combination of the sea, natural beauty and the distinctive culture of local communities. “When I first visited Chabahar, what impressed me most was the diversity of its natural attractions and landscapes,” Hassanpour said. He added that the Gulf of Oman coastline, Martian Mountains, Lipar Lagoon, Beris rocky coast and surrounding natural areas each offer unique experiences that make every visit different. Hassanpour highlighted Chabahar’s climate as one of its major advantages, saying that despite common perceptions about southern Iran’s heat, the city enjoys pleasant conditions during summer, particularly when monsoon winds arrive.

“The hospitality of the people of Chabahar is also an important part of the travel experience,” he said, adding that the warm and friendly attitude of local residents helps visitors feel welcome. He said Chabahar has the potential to become one of Iran’s leading tourism destinations, but emphasized that better promotion of attractions, expansion of accommodation facilities, development of marine activities and improved tourism infrastructure are needed to attract more domestic and foreign visitors. Meanwhile, Omar Baloch, deputy head of cultural affairs and tourism at the Chabahar Free Zone Organization, said the Makoran coastline has emerged in recent years as one of the country’s most important development areas, with significant potential in both economic and tourism sectors. He said the Chabahar Free Zone, while playing a key role in economic, logistics and transit activities, has also adopted a targeted approach toward

tourism development. “We believe balanced development can only be achieved when culture, society and social responsibilities receive attention alongside economic growth,” Baloch said. He added that social and cultural initiatives implemented by the organization have helped strengthen public trust and increase participation in tourism and cultural programs. Referring to the region’s natural attractions, Baloch said the Makoran coast benefits from exceptional geographical features. He described the Martian Mountains, with their distinctive geological formations and landscapes, as one of the rare natural phenomena in Iran and beyond. He also pointed to Lipar Lagoon, known as the “Pink Lake,” as another unique attraction, along with the scenic Beris coastline, coastal cliffs and the vast landscapes of Makoran. “These natural resources are valuable assets that must be properly introduced and managed,” he said.

Regarding accommodation capacity, Baloch said more than 1,400 accommodation beds are currently operating in Chabahar, but the growing number of visitors means additional capacity will be needed in the future. He said around 3,000 new accommodation units, including hotels, guesthouses and eco-lodges, are currently under construction. Some of these projects are expected to become operational by the end of 2025, with the remainder scheduled for completion in 2026. According to Baloch, expanding accommodation capacity will not only improve tourism services but also contribute to employment and economic growth in the region. He also highlighted Chabahar’s potential for marine tourism, saying the city’s direct access to the sea provides significant opportunities for water-based recreational activities. The Chabahar Free Zone Organization has supported investors seeking to enter the sector, he said, adding that a modern marine rec-

reation complex near Lipar coast is under construction and is expected to open by the end of 2025. Baloch also said international studies are underway for investment opportunities in the sixth zone of the Free Zone’s tourism area, with the goal of attracting projects that meet global standards. He further pointed to the planned 103-hectare lake project as one of Chabahar’s major tourism initiatives. The project, he said, could provide families with a safe environment for water-based activities, particularly for visitors who may be hesitant to use open sea facilities. The artificial lake is expected to diversify tourism services in the region and enhance visitors’ experiences, he added. With its unique combination of coastal landscapes, cultural heritage and expanding infrastructure, Chabahar is seeking to establish itself as a major tourism hub along the Makoran coast and a destination capable of attracting visitors throughout the year.

How modern museums began in Iran

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When the question of Iran’s “first museum” is raised, many people immediately think of the National Museum of Iran — formerly known as the Museum of Ancient Iran. Yet the history of museum development in the country is more nuanced. The answer depends largely on how the term “museum” is defined. If the criterion is the first space dedicated to displaying historical objects, the story begins during the reign of Qajar king Naser al-Din Shah at Golestan Palace. If the focus is on the first official museum institution, Dar ul-Funun holds that distinction. And if the benchmark is the first purpose-built museum building, then the Museum of Ancient Iran — today’s National Museum of Iran — is unquestionably the answer according to ISNA. The first serious step toward modern museology in Iran came during the reign of Naser al-Din Shah. Inspired by the great museums he visited during his travels to Europe, he ordered the demolition of



Dar ul-Funun School
● wikipedia.org



Mirror Hall
● hamshahronline.ir



National Museum of Iran
● irannationalmuseum.ir

part of the northern section of Golestan Palace to make way for a new complex that would house historical artifacts, a library, a grand hall, and a traditional pool chamber. The project resulted in the construction of the famed Mirror Hall, where precious objects, gifts from foreign monarchs and governments, historical artifacts, and the royal jewels were displayed. Many historians regard it as Iran’s first museum space in the modern sense. In fact, Naser al-Din Shah had already become familiar with the concept of a museum before his journeys to Europe and had designated a hall as the “Museum Room.” However, his travels abroad strengthened his deter-

mination to establish a proper museum. The construction of the Mirror Hall — also referred to as the “New Museum Room” — turned that ambition into reality. Historical accounts suggest that the Qajar ruler considered the project so important that he personally supervised the arrangement of the exhibits with meticulous attention. Several decades later, museum culture in Iran expanded beyond the royal court and assumed a broader public and educational role. In 1916, the Ministry of Education and Fine Arts, under the initiative of Morteza-Qoli Khan Momtaz al-Molk, allocated one of the halls of Dar ul-Funun School to serve as a museum. A collection of historical and archaeolog-

ical objects was opened to the public, an event many scholars identify as the beginning of Iran’s first official museum. The collection was later transferred to the Masoudieh Mansion. A few years afterward, in 1923, a specialized museum dedicated to the study of weapons and military history was established at Tehran’s Military Academy. This period represents the transition from the royal museums of the Qajar era to the specialized museums that emerged under the Pahlavi dynasty. On May 11, 1929, construction began on the Museum of Ancient Iran, the first building in the country designed from the outset specifically as a museum.

The museum was designed by the French architect and archaeologist André Godard and built by two Iranian master builders, Abbas-Ali Memar and Ostad Morad Tabrizi. The structure occupies a site of approximately 5,500 square meters, with nearly 2,744 square meters of built-up area. The museum officially opened its doors to the public in 1937, marking a milestone in Iran’s cultural heritage. For the first time, the country had a purpose-built, modern museum that brought together a comprehensive collection of its archaeological treasures under one roof. Today, the National Museum of Iran consists of two main sections: the Museum of Ancient Iran, which

houses artifacts spanning from prehistory to the end of the Sassanid Empire, and the Museum of the Islamic Era, inaugurated in 1996, which displays works from Iran’s Islamic period. With a collection of more than three million historical objects, the National Museum of Iran remains one of the Middle East’s foremost institutions for archaeology and cultural heritage. Beyond preserving artifacts, the National Museum of Iran has played a central role in archaeological research, conservation, and public education. Its collections continue to provide valuable insight into the cultural, artistic, and technological achievements of successive Iranian civilizations, making

the museum not only a repository of the past but also a bridge connecting Iran’s rich heritage with future generations. The evolution from the royal collections of the Qajar court to a modern national museum also reflects broader social and cultural changes in Iran. What began as a display intended for the monarchy gradually developed into a public institution dedicated to scholarship, education, and the preservation of the nation’s historical identity. Today, the museum remains one of the country’s most important cultural landmarks, attracting researchers and visitors from around the world who seek to better understand the history of the Iranian Plateau.