

Shirabad Waterfalls offer spectacular nature escape in Golestan

Iranica Desk

Among Golestan Province's natural attractions, the Shirabad Waterfalls complex holds a special place. Located in Fenderesk Rural District in Ramian, within the vicinity of Shirabad village, the complex is accessible from Khanbebin and then via Shirabad village. The Shirabad Waterfalls are a series of seven natural waterfalls formed in a forested mountainous landscape. Each waterfall differs in height, pool shape, water flow and location, making the Shirabad trail one of the province's most appealing nature-tourism routes.

The first waterfall is located at the end of Shirabad Park, following a forest access road. Visitors must leave their vehicles at the end of the road and continue part of the way on foot, according to chn.ir

Standing about 35 meters high, the first waterfall is the tallest in the complex. A large pool of about 700 square meters has formed at its base, with varying depths that reach approximately 17 meters at some points.

Its rocky cliff, considerable height and expansive pool have made the first waterfall the main destination for many visitors. Shirabad, however, extends far beyond this waterfall, with the continuation of the trail revealing different and less-visited landscapes.

After passing the first waterfall and walking about 300 meters along the natural trail, visitors reach the second waterfall. Known locally as the "Bride Waterfall," it is named for its broad stream of white water cascading from a relatively low height, resembling

bling a bride's veil. The second waterfall is about 12 meters high and has a pool covering approximately 288 square meters at its base. The deepest point of the pool is reported to be about nine meters. The combination of green walls surrounding the waterfall, its white stream of water and the natural pool below makes this section one of the most scenic parts of the route.

Reaching the third waterfall requires another 400 meters of walking along the forest trail and



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following the signs. Located between two rocky walls, the waterfall is not easily visible from the main trail, earning it the name "Hidden Waterfall."

The third waterfall is about five meters high, with a pool covering 32 square meters and reaching approximately two meters in depth. Shirabad Cave, another major natural attraction, is located in the same area between the second and third waterfalls.

One of the important natural caves in Ramian, Shirabad Cave is notable for its flowing water, natural pools, limestone formations and direct connection to the

waterfall complex. Much of the cave is in complete darkness, while a spring at its far end contributes to the formation of the cave and its natural features.

Over time, the movement of water and the area's geological characteristics have led to the formation of natural pools, basin-shaped rock formations and limestone formations, including stalactites.

In addition to its geological features, Shirabad Cave is also environmentally significant and is known as a habitat for several animal species, including the Caucasian salamander.

The forested and mountainous surroundings of the cave also provide habitat for species such as red deer, roe deer, bears, leopards and other wildlife found in the region.

The cave is also associated with various local stories and legends. In some accounts, it is referred to as the Div-e Sepid Cave (White Demon Cave), a name that reflects the cultural heritage and local folklore surrounding the natural attraction.

Access to the fourth, fifth and sixth waterfalls becomes more difficult, requiring visitors to cross rocky sections and areas along the river.

Further upstream, the water divides into two branches, forming two waterfalls close to each other known as the "Twin Waterfalls."

The fourth waterfall is about six meters high, with a pool covering approximately 20 square meters and reaching nearly four meters in depth. The fifth waterfall is also about six meters high. Its pool covers approximately 42 square meters and reaches a maximum depth of about two meters.

The proximity of the two waterfalls and the simultaneous flow of water along two separate channels create one of the complex's distinctive

natural scenes. The sixth waterfall lies upstream from the fifth. It is about 10 meters high and has a pool covering approximately 80 square meters, with a depth of around three meters.

A rocky trail beside this waterfall continues toward the seventh waterfall. Access to this section is more difficult than to the earlier waterfalls, giving the nature-tourism route a more challenging character.

After another 100 meters, visitors reach the seventh waterfall, which is about

26 meters high. A pool of approximately 12 square meters and about one meter deep lies at its base.

From the first to the seventh waterfall, the Shirabad trail offers visitors a diverse combination of varying heights, natural pools, rocky cliffs and different patterns of water flow.

The Shirabad Cave and Waterfalls complex is located near Khanbebin. The access route from Khanbebin continues toward Shirabad village, after which visitors pass through the village and continue to the park and entrance to the waterfall complex.

The first section of the route is more accessible, but beyond the first waterfall, the trail is largely natural, requiring visitors to cross forest paths, riverbanks and rocky sections to reach the subsequent waterfalls.

This gradual transition from the park and walking paths into a fully natural environment is one of the features that makes the Shirabad experience distinctive. The succession of waterfalls, natural cave, geological formations, biodiversity and forest setting make Shirabad more than simply a recreational destination.

The area also offers considerable potential for nature tourism, scientific tourism, geological studies, environmental research and exploration of the biodiversity of Golestan's forests.

The presence of the cave, limestone formations, natural pools, continuously flowing water and habitats of various animal species brings a remarkable range of natural features together within a relatively compact area.

Shirabad is one of those destinations that reveals an increasingly pristine and natural character the farther visitors travel along the route — from the first, high-volume waterfall to the Bride Waterfall, Hidden Waterfall, mysterious cave, Twin Waterfalls and finally the seventh waterfall deep in the forest.

With these features, the Shirabad Cave and Waterfalls complex is one of the valuable natural tourism assets of Ramian and Golestan Province. Protecting its natural environment and managing visitor access can help ensure the sustainable use of one of the province's most remarkable natural attractions.

Sheikh Shaban village emerges as Iran's Khatam hub

Iranica Desk

Sheikh Shaban village in Ben, Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari Province, has emerged as one of Iran's key centers for Khatamkari, the traditional Persian art of intricate geometric inlay, with hundreds of artisans involved in the craft.

Khatamkari is one of the province's most important traditional handicrafts and is produced mainly in Sheikh Shaban. Although the art's intellectual heritage is associated with artisans in Shiraz and Isfahan, the craft was introduced to Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari about 50 years ago through the traditional master-apprentice system and quickly spread among local communities.

The growth of Khatamkari has made Sheikh Shaban an important national center for the production of Gol-e Khatam, or Khatam rods

and bundles. Around 400 craftspeople in the village are now familiar with the production of these components.

Khatamkari involves arranging small triangular pieces alongside one another to create intricate geometric patterns. The craft uses natural materials including wood, bone, copper wire and metal filaments.

Its products range from tissue boxes, jewelry boxes, wastebaskets, pen cases, Qur'an stands and chocolate boxes to tables, chairs, beds, picture frames and a wide variety of household items.

Jahanbakhsh Torki, head of the Training and Production Support Department at the Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization, said local artisans produce more than 300,000 khatam rods or



bundles annually. He said Khatam products generate around 300 percent added value, making the craft one of the province's economically significant handicraft sectors.

Torki said the production of Khatam in Sheikh Shaban has a history of more than five decades. Many prominent Khatam artisans,

retailers and producers in Isfahan are originally from the village, he added.

According to Torki, 120 artisans are currently directly involved in Khatamkari in Sheikh Shaban. They work in 80 home-based and centralized workshops producing Khatam and Gol-Bandi, as well as a variety of finished products.

The provincial Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization, in cooperation with the

industrial companies, has also taken steps to establish and activate a specialized khatam production cluster in Sheikh Shaban.

Torki pointed to the rising cost of raw materials as one of the main challenges facing khatam producers, saying the provincial organization has pursued the issue with the relevant ministry.

He said the development of handicrafts such as Khatamkari can contribute to job creation, lower unemployment, stimulate local economic activity, reduce uncontrolled migration and encourage villagers who have moved to cities to return to their communities.

He added that products made by Sheikh Shaban artisans are sent to and marketed in the provinces of Isfahan and Fars Province, as well as Tehran.

Sheikh Shaban is now widely known as a major center of Khatamkari in

Iran and has the potential to become a destination for domestic and international tourists visiting Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari throughout the year, Torki said.

Khatam products are also increasingly marketed as distinctive souvenirs in tourist destinations across Iran, attracting both domestic and foreign visitors.

Khatam-making, or Khatamkari, is regarded as one of Iran's distinctive traditional arts. The technique involves creating geometric patterns from combinations of regular polygons — typically five-, six-, seven-, eight- or 10-sided forms — by precisely arranging tiny triangular pieces of different materials.

Sheikh Shaban is located about 40 kilometers from Shahrekord, the provincial capital, and has become known as one of Iran's leading centers for the craft.



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