

Iran targets 2m tourists by 2028 as incentives rolled out for tourism investment

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran plans to attract two million foreign tourists a year and generate €6 billion in tourism revenue by 2028, while expanding private investment through new incentives and a major increase in state-backed financing, tourism minister said. Reza Salehi-Amiri said about 3,800 tourism projects were currently under way across Iran, all privately owned, with the government focused on policy-making, support, licensing and removing obstacles, IRNA reported in Saturday. He said the government had introduced five major incentives for the sector, including discounts of up to 80% on municipal fees for hotel construction, customs exemptions for importing hotel equipment, lower water, electricity and gas costs, and permitted for mixed-use hotel, residential and commercial complexes. "These incentives have led to a new wave of demand for tourism infrastructure development," Salehi-Amiri said.

According to the minister, bank financing for tourism projects has also surged 20-fold in 2024 to more than IRR500 trillion (\$270 million) this year. Iran will prioritize tourists from Central Asia and the Caucasus, followed by Persian Gulf Arab states and neighboring countries, major Muslim countries including Indonesia, Malaysia and Egypt, and then China and Russia. Europe, Australia and the US are ranked as a fifth-tier market. Salehi-Amiri said Chinese tourists were currently waiting for the regional security situation and war to ease before deciding whether to travel to Iran, while Russian tourism had also declined following the Russia-Ukraine war and regional conflicts. The minister said each foreign tourist spends an average of \$1,270 in Iran, calling tourism a major economic opportunity because its foreign currency earnings are distributed directly through the domestic economy.



Iran also receives about one million people a year for medical treatment, with hospital, treatment and surgery costs av-

eraging between one-third and one-fifth of regional prices and about one-tenth of European costs, he said.

Foreign tourists visit a historical mosque in Sari, northern Iran.
● IRNA

Salehi-Amiri called for collective efforts to reach out to the seven to nine million Iranians living abroad, saying they should be encouraged to visit relatives in Iran rather than traveling elsewhere. "We must reconcile with Iranians, invite them to their own home and put aside relationships that are full of ornamentation," he said. Iran has about one million historical sites, while 58 properties are on UNESCO's tentative list. It has 27 intangible cultural heritage entries and ranks fourth globally in that field, according to the minister. For handicrafts, Iran has set a 2028 target of €500 million in revenue, 100,000 jobs and 8% growth. Salehi-Amiri hoped that after the current conditions ease, tourism could open the way for cultural diplomacy and help present a real image of Iran.

Prominent composer Alizadeh receives Rouhollah Khaleqi trophy

Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian composer and musician Hossein Alizadeh has received the Master Rouhollah Khaleqi Trophy at the fourth Rouhollah Khaleqi National Composition Award, in a ceremony held at the home of veteran composer and conductor Farhad Fakhreddini in Tehran.

The ceremony, attended by musicians, members of the Khaleqi Iranian Instruments Orchestra and judges, was described by organizers as a symbol of "link between the experience of music masters and the capacity of the new generation," IRIB-NEWS reported on Saturday.

Alizadeh, a leading figure in Iranian composition, performance, education and the development of new approaches to Iranian music, was given the trophy in recognition of decades of artistic work, composition and teaching. The trophy is awarded each year to an influential Iranian music master. Previous recipients were Fakhreddini and composer Mohammadreza Fayyaz. Fakhreddini, who received the trophy in the previous edition, hosted this year's ceremony at his Tehran home. Members of the Khaleqi Iranian Instruments Or-



Iranian composer Hossein Alizadeh (L) poses for a photo with veteran conductor Farhad Fakhreddini as he holds a trophy during a ceremony in Tehran on August 22, 2026.
● IRIBNEWS

chestra performed at the event. The award, headed by Mohammadreza Azizi, was established to support young composers, identify emerging talent and open professional opportunities in Iranian music. Alongside its competition and research sections, the orchestra provides young musicians with opportunities for training, experience and collective performance. The composition jury comprises Shahrām Tavakoli, Pouya Saraei, Saeed Farajpour, Ali Akbar Ghorbani, Arash Gooran and Keivan Saket. The

research jury comprises Babak Khazraei, Hussein Meysami and Saraei. The award and orchestra were established in 2023 with support from the Journal of Art and Aesthetics Studies to preserve Khaleqi's musical legacy, support new creativity in Iranian composition and strengthen Iranian orchestral music. The official call for the fourth edition was issued in August, with entries accepted through khaleqiaward.ir until October 23. The ceremony also unveiled the official poster for the new edition.

Iranian short film 'Pasta Alfredo' to vie at India's Jagran Film Festival

Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian short film Pasta Alfredo, written and directed by Leila Noei and produced by Seyed Raham Rasouli, will compete at the 14th Jagran International Film Festival in India, adding another stop to its international festival run.

The festival opened in Delhi on August 20 and will close in Mumbai on November 1. Pasta Alfredo is scheduled to screen on the fourth day of the festival in Hall 2, ILNA reported on Saturday.

The film stars Mohana Seyed, Saeed Nejati, Sima Khan-Vakili, Barbod Farshidzadeh and Mohammadreza Ariansadr.

"Niloufar, a 14-year-old girl, tries to bring a moment of warmth to the cold atmosphere of her home by organizing a birthday party for her cat and cooking pasta," the film's synopsis says.

The Jagran selection comes after the film's appearance at several international festivals. It won Best Student Short Film at Albania's 13th Dea Open Air



Festival and was selected for the 16th Fenacies Festival in Uruguay, where it is due to compete as the only Iranian short film in the event's Student Competition. The film has also screened at Italy's 21st Dieciminuti Film Festival and 23rd CortiSonanti Film Festival, Russia's 33rd St. Anna International Film Festival, and the competition section of Kosovo's 14th FerFILM Festival. The latest selection adds to the film's international festival run.

Iranian researchers develop hydrogel for breast cancer treatment

Social Desk

Researchers at Iran's Arak University have developed a light-sensitive hydrogel that combines chemotherapy with photodynamic therapy and killed more than 80% of breast cancer cells in laboratory tests, while causing no significant damage to healthy cells. The drug-delivery system uses natural chitosan hydrogel as a biological base for two therapeutic agents: the anti-cancer drug methotrexate (MTX) and the light-sensitive compound perylene diimide (PDI), ISNA reported on Saturday. Researcher Farnaz Azadikhah said the system was designed to improve the effectiveness of breast cancer treatment while reducing the side effects associated with conventional chemotherapy. Methotrexate works by inhibiting

an enzyme involved in DNA synthesis, limiting the growth and reproduction of cancer cells. Its controlled release from the hydrogel is intended to maintain a therapeutic concentration around the tumor while reducing wider distribution through the body. PDI acts as a photosensitizer. When exposed to laser light at a suitable wavelength, it generates reactive oxygen species, particularly singlet oxygen, which can damage vital cell structures including DNA, proteins and lipids and drive cancer cells towards programmed cell death. Tests showed the system, using a low dose of methotrexate combined with laser irradiation, killed more than 80% of MDA-MB-231 breast cancer cells, while MCF-10A healthy cells showed no significant damage. "The combination of chemotherapy with photody-

namic therapy in a single platform increases treatment efficiency," Azadikhah said, adding that the two approaches target cancer cells through different mechanisms and could potentially work against some chemotherapy-resistant cells. The researchers said the system could also have potential for other cancers that respond to chemotherapy and photodynamic therapy. Its controlled drug release and the localized effect of the light treatment could cut down on damage to healthy tissue and reduce side effects such as nausea, vomiting, mouth sores and toxicity affecting the liver and kidneys. However, the researchers stressed that the findings remain at the laboratory stage and that further preclinical and clinical studies are needed before the treatment can be used in patients.