

Lavandevil aims to move beyond a stopover destination

Iranica Desk

Lavandevil can be considered one of the lesser-known tourism hubs in western part of Gilan Province. The city and its surrounding area encompass a diverse range of attractions, from the Caspian Sea coast and wetlands to the Hyrcanian forests, Latun Waterfall, Kuteh Kumeh hot spring and the Lavandevil Wildlife Refuge. Despite these natural assets, the area continues to face challenges, including inadequate infrastructure and short tourist stays.

According to IRNA, Lavandevil's location along the Astara-Talesh route, its proximity to the Caspian Sea and access to a range of natural attractions have made it one of the key tourism assets of Astara. With proper planning, investment and local community participation, this potential could play a greater role in the regional economy.

Latun Waterfall, located in the mountainous areas of Lavandevil, is the area's most important natural attraction. It draws a considerable number of nature tourists and mountaineers every year. The journey to the waterfall is also part of the attraction, with visitors enjoying views of the Hyrcanian forests, rivers and surrounding highlands along the way.

Alongside Latun, the Kuteh Kumeh hot spring, nearby villages and the area's forested landscapes offer considerable potential for developing rural tourism and ecotourism. This potential could encourage visitors to stay in the area longer rather than making only brief stops. The coast and Sadaf tourism complex, wetlands and the Lavandevil Wildlife Refuge form another part of the area's chain of attractions. This diversity gives Lavandevil the potential to attract visitors with a range of interests, from nature-based and coastal tourism to rural tourism and wildlife experiences.

Ahmad Dadashzadeh-Asl, head of the Astara Department of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, said construction of the first hotel in Lavandevil has reached 50 percent completion. He



said the complex is being built with 20 rooms and 48 beds, along with a range of accommodation, recreational and welfare facilities. He said construction of the hotel, the first hotel in the Lavandevil area, is aimed at developing tourism infrastructure and increasing accommodation capacity for visitors. He added that once completed, the hotel will have 20 rooms with a capacity of 48 beds. Planned facilities include a restaurant, coffee shop, swimming pool, bowling alley and sports areas. Construction is currently about 50 percent complete, while parts of the com-

plex's recreational and sports facilities are also under construction. Dadashzadeh-Asl said such facilities could help develop tourism infrastructure in Lavandevil, increase the length of visitors' stays and boost tourism-related economic activities in the area. Referring to Lavandevil's natural and tourism potential, he said the area's natural attractions and its location along Astara's tourism route have made strengthening accommodation and service infrastructure increasingly necessary. He emphasized that cultural heritage, tourism and handicrafts are valuable

assets for the development of the area and said the department's goal is to introduce Astara's historical, cultural and natural attractions to domestic and international tourists and create conditions for more travel to the area. Dadashzadeh-Asl added that developing tourism infrastructure is a priority, while careful planning and private-sector cooperation can play a decisive role in increasing visitor stays and improving the quality of their trips. Referring to Astara's geographic location and proximity to the border, he said its pristine nature, busy customs facilities, coastline and natural and historical attractions offer suitable opportunities for investment in tourism. Dadashzadeh identified the short length of tourist stays as one of the challenges facing tourism in Astara, saying visitors currently stay in the area for less than one day. He said developing accommodation and dining facilities is essential to extending their stays. Vali Dadashi, Astara's representative in Parliament, also said completion of the hotel could create new employment opportunities for young people in the area. He emphasized that tourism development in Lavandevil should not be limited solely to increasing accommodation capacity, adding that the area's natural, historical and cultural assets should also be used to attract visitors and encourage longer stays. The lawmaker said investment in accommodation infrastructure can boost tourism only when accompanied by the promotion and development of local attractions, the creation of tourism services and measures to encourage visitors to spend more time in the area. At the same time, making use of private-sector investment alongside Lavandevil's natural and cultural resources could strengthen tourism while creating employment and supporting economic growth for local residents. One of Lavandevil's advantages is the close connection between its natural attractions and the lives of local com-



munities. In addition to their scenic surroundings, the area's villages have the potential to offer local products, traditional foods, handicrafts and accommodation services. Developing ecotourism lodges, launching small tourism businesses, employing local young people as nature guides and marketing rural products could increase the local community's share of tourism revenue. Under such conditions, tourists would not merely visit a natural attraction; their presence could also contribute to the growth of local restaurants, accommodation facilities, sales of local products, transportation and other services. However, increased tourism in Lavandevil also has another side: without proper management, greater visitor numbers could put pressure on forests, rivers, wetlands and the area's natural habitats. The presence of the Lavandevil Wildlife Refuge and the location of some tourism attractions within environmentally sensitive areas make the move toward sustainable tourism even more important. Organizing tourism routes, managing waste, providing restrooms and visitor facilities where needed, preventing unregulated construction and educating tourists and local communities are among the measures that could help strike a balance between tourism development and nature conservation. Experts say tourism development should not alter Lavandevil's natural character. Instead, the goal should be to provide infrastructure that allows visitors to enjoy nature without damaging it.

Makoran reveals geological story of Earth

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Makoran is a name that carries a story hundreds of millions of years old — a story of continental collisions, the crashing waves of the Indian Ocean and the remarkable adaptability of life in one of the harshest climates on Earth. Ali Ghomi Avili, a specialist in ecology and world natural heritage, wrote in a note published by CHTN that Makoran, stretching from Gwatar and Pasabandar in Chabahar to Jask in Hormozgan Province, is far more than a coastline. It is a "living laboratory" where the pulse of Earth's tectonic activity can be observed at the very point where land meets the sea. The note offers an integrated account of this natural masterpiece, from the hidden layers of its geology to the fragile ecosystems that have developed along its shores. To understand Makoran, it is necessary to look beyond the surface and into the depths of the ocean and Earth's crust. The



landscape of this coastline was shaped not by calm, but by one of the world's most active convergent continental boundaries. This vast section of Earth's crust is slowly but continuously being forced beneath the Eurasian Plate. Through this intense process, a massive geological structure known as the Makoran accretionary prism has been formed. Like folds etched into the surface of the Earth, the accretionary prism is the product of ocean-floor sediments being compressed and deformed and gradually pushed upward over millions of years. The result of this silent but powerful collision is a coastline that is not static,

but constantly evolving. The mud volcanoes of Konarak are among the clearest expressions of this geological activity. They appear like openings through which the Earth breathes, with columns of mud and fluids rising from deep within the accretionary prism and reaching the surface. They reflect the continuing movement of sediments and fluids within a geological structure that is still taking shape. Nearby, the Shourain saltwater spring provides another sign of Makoran's dynamic geology. Its water does not originate from rainfall, but from underground water sources affected by tec-



tonic processes and intense evaporation. The region is presented not as a single, continuous site, but as a "serial natural property" comprising seemingly separate components that are, in reality, interconnected like links in a chain. Among them are the Miniature Mountains, locally known as the "Martian Mountains." Their ochre-colored hills have been sculpted by wind and water from unconsolidated coastal sediments into striking corridors, columns and other formations that appear to belong to another planet. The crescent-shaped bays of Beris and Pozm, meanwhile,

form tranquil recesses among rugged cliffs, creating a striking contrast with the turbulent waters of the Indian Ocean. The Darak coastal area and Gurdin Rock add further diversity to the landscape. But Makoran is not simply a story of rocks and water. In the midst of its vast arid landscape, the Pink Lagoon stands out like a jewel. This rare ecosystem owes its distinctive pink color not to artificial pigments, but to halophilic microorganisms and the particular chemical conditions of its waters. Further along the coast, the mangrove forests of Gwatar Bay form a green refuge between

land and sea. They provide habitat for migratory birds and countless aquatic species, which find shelter from the region's arid conditions and high salinity among the aerial roots of the mangroves. Elsewhere, ancient temple fig trees have survived in rocky terrain and shallow soils. These venerable trees demonstrate the remarkable resilience of life in the face of water scarcity, salinity and extreme heat. The natural landscapes of Rig and Khor-e Tang complete this remarkable mosaic. Erosional and sedimentary processes have created distinctive landforms across these dry coastal environments. Together, the components form a continuous natural landscape in which tectonic forces, ocean waters, eroded soils and highly adapted forms of life have become intricately intertwined, creating an extraordinary masterpiece of nature. Inscription of the site on the UNESCO World Heritage List would be an important and historic step toward recognizing, protecting and promoting a remarkable concentration of geodiversity. Here, fire, water, soil and life have combined in an extraordinary interplay along the shores of the Indian Ocean.