

Mehr Shiraz Event aims to boost tourism

Iranica Desk

The Mehr Shiraz Tourism Event, a month-long tourism initiative held from late September to mid October in Iran’s southern city of Shiraz, is seeking to boost visitor numbers and lengthen tourist stays by showcasing the city’s cultural and historical heritage through a program of festivals, exhibitions, tours, concerts and other events. Speaking at a press conference to announce programs for Tourism Week, held from September 27 to October 4, Behdad Moridi, director general of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization of Fars Province, described the Mehr Shiraz Tourism Event as a comprehensive strategy for provincial branding and the development of the tourism economy. He said the ultimate objective was to transform Shiraz into a destination for events taking place throughout the day and night while encouraging visitors to extend their stays. Moridi said a significant

portion of last year’s plans for the digital transformation of tourism services, systems and platforms had been implemented. He added that branding had remained a central priority, with efforts focused on turning Mehr Shiraz into a recognizable tourism brand capable of attracting visitors from around the world. Moridi emphasized the role of tourism associations and professional organizations in implementing the event, saying they should play an active role rather than simply serve as participants at official gatherings. “We believe associations should not merely be decorative elements at events; they should be at the center of implementation,” he said, adding that government institutions, including the provincial administration and municipality, should work alongside them. “Tourists need a reason to travel. We have to organize celebrations and fill the city with events, moment by moment, to create that motivation,” Moridi said.



● respina24.ir

He outlined four major components of the Mehr Shiraz Tourism Event. These include efforts to internationally register the “From the Ecstasy of Mysticism to the Secret of the Ghazal” event; a national investment conference featuring specialized meetings with the participation of the Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts and 100 leading investors from across the country; Expo 2026; and a national

tourism and handicrafts exhibition at Molla Sadra Hall. The program will also promote nighttime tourism by introducing after-hours visits to major heritage sites, including Persepolis, Pasargadae, the Tomb of Hafez and the Tomb of S’adi. According to Moridi, these programs will rely on smart tourism technologies and cooperation among travel agencies and tour guides. He said the event’s pro-

grams had been designed with families and children in mind, alongside literary tourism initiatives and special consideration for accessible tourism for people with disabilities. Moridi also announced plans by the Association of Travel Service Offices to develop affordable and economy tour packages aimed at promoting tourism within Fars Province. Moridi said efforts were also being made to ensure

that major cultural events, including concerts, generated greater economic benefits for the province. In coordination with the provincial Department of Culture and Islamic Guidance, he said, travel agencies would be encouraged to incorporate concert attendance into tourism packages, allowing visitors to purchase concerts and related tourism services together. The objective is to keep a greater share of the resulting revenue within the provincial tourism economy. He also called for scientific and academic conferences to be held outside university campuses and in venues across the city. Such a move, he said, could increase hotel occupancy and provide greater economic benefits for the local community. Moridi thanked tour guides, whom he described as ambassadors of Iranian culture, and called on the media to widely promote the permanent event secretariat as a reference point for monthly tourism programs. He said

maintaining a continuous calendar of events would help sustain tourism activity across Fars Province. Mahmoud Fakhri, head of the Fars Province Association of Air Travel and Tourism Service Offices, said the Mehr Shiraz Tourism Event was being organized at a difficult time for the tourism industry, which has faced a downturn following flight cancellations and declining activity at tourism facilities. He described the event as an effort to revive tourism businesses and restart the economic cycle of tourism in Fars Province. Fakhri stressed the need to rely on domestic capabilities and take proactive measures rather than waiting for external developments. Health tourism is among the key themes. Fakhri said guests from Afghanistan’s health sector had been invited to Shiraz, with business-to-business meetings planned between the visiting delegation and Shiraz travel agencies to explore opportunities for cooperation.

Meyami’s caravanserais; echoes of Iran’s historic roads

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Meyami, the easternmost part of Semnan Province, is one of the most important historical points along the Tehran–Mashhad route and the ancient roads of Iran. For centuries, the region has served as a passageway for caravans, travelers, and merchants. This strategic location led to the development of a valuable network of caravanserais. The caravanserais of Meyami, Miandasht, Abbasabad, and other historic structures in the region were not merely places where travelers stopped to rest; they were also an integral part of Iran’s broader history of commercial, cultural, and social connections. The construction of facilities designed to provide travelers with comfort and security was one of the most important achievements in the history of travel and communication. Such structures were generally built along difficult routes, in hot and arid regions, and on major communication roads. Iranians were among the pioneers in constructing and developing these facilities. Over time, they evolved into what became known as caravanserais. Throughout history, caravanserais served purposes beyond accommodation and rest. They helped meet the needs of caravans, promoted trade, facilitated connections between different regions, and encouraged social and cultural interaction. Each of these structures can therefore be regarded as part of the history of Iran’s roads — a history shaped

along the Silk Road and the communication routes linking the eastern and western parts of the country. A caravanserai can generally be described as a building designed to accommodate caravans and travelers, constructed according to their needs and adapted to the climatic and geographical conditions of the route. The word “caravanserai” itself reflects the Iranian origins of these structures. The term “caravan” is derived from “karban,” and the word is rooted in the Parthian Middle Persian language. Its etymology demonstrates the close relationship between the concept of the caravanserai and trade and commerce. Caravans stopped at these establishments to rest, obtain daily necessities, conduct commercial exchanges, and seek protection from bandits and natural hazards. Caravanserais, therefore, cannot be regarded merely as architectural structures. They formed part of a broader communication and economic system in which roads, trade, travel, security, and interaction among different communities were closely interconnected. During periods such as the Achaemenid, Parthian, Mongol, Seljuk, Ottoman, and Safavid eras, caravanserais expanded alongside the growth of trade and commerce and became important elements of the communication networks connecting different territories. The origins of the caravanserai can be traced back to pre-Islamic Iran. The climatic conditions, vast

geography, extensive territories of the Achaemenid Empire, and its wide-ranging contacts with other peoples contributed to the establishment of a network of postal stations and communication centers. These facilities can be regarded as precursors to the caravanserais of later periods. Iranians were among the first in world history to organize an extensive system of major long-distance roads. What is known today as the caravanserai evolved from the Achaemenid postal stations and the commercial and trading waystations of the Parthian and Sasanian periods along the Silk Road. Meyami has historically enjoyed particular importance as a transportation and communication corridor because of its location on the Tehran–Mashhad route and its connections with Golestan, North Khorasan, and Khorasan Razavi provinces. One of the most significant indications of this historical



Miandasht Caravanserai
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importance is the presence of numerous caravanserais throughout the region. The concentration of so many caravanserais demonstrates Meyami’s important role in historical commercial and communication networks and highlights its considerable potential for cultural and historical tourism. Forty kilometers east of Meyami, along the Meyami–Mashhad road, lies the Miandasht Caravanserai Complex, one of the most significant examples of caravanserai architecture in Iran. Considered the largest caravanserai complex in the country, it consists of three caravanserais, three water

reservoirs, a dovecote, a postal station, and the historic village of Miandasht. The western caravanserai dates from the Safavid period, while the other two were built during the Qajar era. The presence of structures from different historical periods within a single complex provides an opportunity to study the evolution of caravanserai architecture, functions, and construction techniques. Approximately 80 kilometers from central Meyami lies the historic village of Abbasabad. At the heart of its historic terraced settlement is the Abbasabad Caravanserai, regarded as the

largest single caravanserai in the region. Built during the Safavid period and extensively restored during the Qajar era, the structure demonstrates the close relationship between caravanserai architecture and the historic fabric of the village. Today, it represents an important opportunity for introducing the region’s history, architecture, and culture to visitors. The Meyami Caravanserai, located within the historic fabric of Meyami, is another notable example of Safavid-era caravanserai architecture. Together with the city’s other historic structures, it forms part of Meyami’s historical identity. Its location within the urban area also illustrates the connection between major communication routes and the development of settlements around them. Approximately 60 kilometers northeast of Meyami, in the small and remote village of Jahanabad, stands another historic caravanserai dating from the Ilkhanid period. The structure has a rectangular, four-ivan design, an architectural form that occupies an important place in the history of Iranian caravanserais. Its presence in a remote area demonstrates that the caravanserai net-

work was not limited to major cities but extended throughout the various routes used by travelers and caravans. Iran’s caravanserai heritage represents not only the country’s ancient history and culture but also an important potential for cultural and historical tourism. Because these structures possess historical, architectural, cultural, and social value, they can play an important role in tourism development programs. Their restoration and appropriate adaptive use, while preserving their historical authenticity, could once again integrate them into contemporary cultural and tourism activities. With its collection of historic caravanserais, Meyami has a valuable opportunity to preserve and revive its cultural heritage, develop tourism, and introduce the region’s historical and cultural potential. Preserving, restoring, and revitalizing these structures can contribute to safeguarding the historical identity of the region while introducing the lesser-known attractions of Meyami to visitors. From this perspective, the caravanserais of Meyami are not merely remnants of the past; they are cultural assets for the future.



Meyami Caravanserai
● wikipedia.org