

Sistan and Baluchestan

The Land of Historical Events

Introduction

In today's world, the tourist industry is one of the important human activities which, depending on the location and its nature, can bring about deep changes in life space and geographical landscapes. During the past few decades, tourism has achieved a substantial place in economic and social interchanges of the world and today has turned into one of the greatest catalysts for social change in human history. At this time Iran, with its rich cultural heritage and valuable and countless

geographical and natural gifts, can turn into one of the important global tourist destinations.

Location

With an area of 187,502 sq. km the province named Sistan Va Baluchestan (Sistan & Baluchestan) is made up of two regions. These are namely Sistan covering some 15,717 sq. km. and the far larger, Baluchestan with 171,785 sq. km. which province is located in the south-east of the

country. This province borders Afghanistan and Pakistan along a 1,200 km. frontier. Mount Malek Siah, located 40 km. from the city of Zahedan is the common border point of Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. Khorasan province is situated to the north of this province with Afghanistan being northeast, Pakistan due east, the Sea of Oman to the south (about 270 km of shoreline), and Kerman and Hormozgan provinces on its western border.

Climate

This province enjoys a varied but altogether temperate climate all year round. The climate can be divided into various regions. Khash enjoys the best climate in the province because of its higher altitude than other townships and is located next to mount Taftan, the highest peak in Baluchestan, in the north.

In addition to Khash, Chabahar Port has vernal climate because of proximity to the Tropic of Cancer. Temperature changes in different seasons are minimal with summers and falls being almost unnoticeable. The trees are forever green during the entire year. The luxuriant growth of the trees led to likening the four seasons here to spring so it was named Chahar Bahar (four springs) which was then abbreviated to Chabahar.

Khash and Chabahar have the best climate and are the most beautiful areas of the province. The Iranshahr, Zabol, and Bahookalat areas enjoy a desert climate, Zahedan area is semi-desert, and the mountainous area of Bamposht south of Saravan, along with the area east to the mounts of Bashagerd, enjoy a mild semi-desert like climate year round. Due to the climatic influence of Indian subcontinent's seasonal changes, especially during October to April, when many tourist destinations are deserted because of cold weather, Sistan & Baluchestan welcomes and entertains tourists and people

interested in nature, with nice weather.

Population

According to the national census of 1996 the population of the province was 1,722,579 and in 2000 was estimated at 1,984,191.

Mores

All the different peoples of the province have their own particular customs and rituals with which they live. Viewing tribal life with their mode of residence and special mores is one of the attractions of the province. Some of the local feasts and occasions are celebrated with more pomp than even Nowrouz such as the Feasts of Sacrifices or Eid Fitr (at the end of the fasting month). They celebrate with vigorous circle dancing to the accompaniment



of the sound of the kettledrum and oboe. In the some parts

of the province, harvesting celebrations take place.

Menswear consists of long shirts and spacious pleated trousers. Women wear long clothes decorated with needlework, raw silk work and pearl work by artisans, veils and ornaments, which are collectively known as Baluchi clothes. Most people are involved in farming and agriculture even while they may hold other jobs.

Music

The folk music of Sistan & Baluchestan is considered to be an art form because of special province's circumstances which, more than other provinces, have celebrated the happy times of this land over a long period of time. There are many local instruments such as the Gheychak, Viol, Bonjo, Lute, Oboe, and Doholack as well as percussion instruments like Tub & Jug, and Kettledrum. The different kinds of folk music of the province can be classed as epic, chamber, mystical, and party each of which denotes the various states of sadness, gladness, epics and devoted morale, virtue, compact of loyalty, patriotism and hospitality of the area's people.

Handicrafts

The most important handicrafts of the province are Baluchi needlework, rug and small carpet weaving, coinwork, mat weaving, pottery, jewelmaking,

(black veil), raw silk work, traditional cloth-weaving and instrument making. Among these the following stand out as very special.

- needlework due to its fineness, variation, and different uses;
- rug and small carpet because of the high quality of the local raw agricultural materials and beautiful patterns;
- coinwork because of its variations and use in weddings and celebrations;
- pottery due its being handmade with long local background
- mat weaving because of the abundance of different species of wild palm and the variety of products

Wildlife

Within this province can be found different kinds of wildlife the most interesting one of which is surely the Iranian Short-Muzzle Crocodile.



This ancient creature is native to this area and has remained much like its ancestral Mesozoic's crocodile, a species that existed some 225-265 million years ago. They have changed very little during the past 65 million years.

Political Geography:

In accordance with the latest political mapping, this province includes 8 townships, 32 counties, 30 cities and 94 villages. The townships of the province are Zahedan, Zabol, Khash, Iranshahr, Sarbaz, Saravan,

Nikshahr and Chabahar.

Zahedan:

The city of Zahedan which, according to the 1996 census, has a population of 487,031, is the capital of the province, situated some 1,397 meters above sea level. There is a distinctive architectural style like the rocky architecture found in Tamin village and in and around Taftan region. There are a number of tourist attractions in Zahedan such as:

- Ladiz area belonging to the Paleolithic with its Ladiz castle;
- Mellat Park Resort area;
- Barasan Recreation Resort Complex;
- Bagh-e Khanevadeh Recreation Cultural Complex;
- The anthropology museum with many beautiful and interesting manifestations of local culture;
- Professor Kambuzia's invaluable library;
- The various historical buildings and monuments such as the market cross, the old post office buildings, the customs building, the Ministry of Justice and post office of Mirjaveh city;
- Makki mosque is the greatest mosque of Sunnis in Iran with stucco work and decorations done in the Indian architecture style;
- Jaame' mosque, Sikhs' Temple, and Rasouli Bazaar & Cross Road are among other important attractions of this city.

Chabahar:

This city is positioned so as to provide a route to international waters and act as a bridge among members of ECO & ASEAN and other countries for production, export and the transit of goods.



Baluch Rug

Due to its commercial free zone, the area has special importance. There are many tourist attractions in this city such as the beautiful shores of Oman Sea; the Pozm, Gowatr and Kenarak ports; the Shahid Beheshti jetty; Gelfeshan - where is one of the Chabahar township's wonders that, much like a volcano, emits mud instead of lava; Hara floating forests which sink into the water at high tide, and return into view at the ebbtide; the shrine of Seyed Gholamrasool belonging to the Teymur era; Tis (Porteghali-ha) Castle; Tis mosque.

Natural Attractions and Eco-Tourism

Ecosystem of Marine Forests

Like some other tropical climates, what tourists find attractive is a plant formation, which is found semi-floating along the sea shoreline. These marine forests are seen at narrow strips of coastal shelters, on the shores of tropical areas among estuaries

and lagoons depression of rivers' mouth between high and low tides. These floating forests only found in certain special regions are alternatively known as Mangrove, Swampy, or Tiding Forests.

At high tide only the tops of the trees which are higher than salt water level, are visible and the lower parts, stem and breath canals, only become so at ebb-tide. These forests are described as coastal plantations and are also called Green Forests as they remain green all year. Along the coastal strip of Persian Gulf and Oman Sea, Hara forests are the most western extent of Mangrove forest's dispersion from the southeast of Asia. These forests sometimes consist of one or two types of mangrove and are the most luxuriant type of Hara.



Imamzadeh Qolam Rasooli, Chabahar

Hara Forests in Sistan & Baluchestan Province

Situated at 25.11 to 25.16 latitude and 61.28 to 61.35 longitude, covering some 200 hectares, the Hara forests of Gowatr Bay are located in the southeast extremity of Iran, within the regional limits of the Chabahar township, 150 km. to east of the city proper. This beautiful place including the Bahoo estuary has been registered as the Twentieth International Marsh on the rolls

of the Ramsar Convention.

Hara forests are uniform in that they are of one plant species and exclude any other plant species within their boundaries but because of their use as crossing areas, they hold within them various kinds of wildlife. These forests are a common gift of land and sea and their protection and preservation as invaluable and sensitive environments, has been emphasized as of great importance in all parts of the world, especially from the viewpoint of tourism. Mangrove forests are so luxuriant and count as the one of the most important centers of natural life.

Some of the more important reasons for the preservation of these forests are the following factors:

- protection of coral stone waters and provision of the required habitat environment for aquatics, birds, and other animals.
- this ecosystem protects the shoreline against erosion by the waves of the sea.

Gelfeshan

There are three hills, that are known as mud –emitters, which are located at a distance of 90 km. to Bandar-e Kenarak in Kahir Plain, before Tang village on an otherwise flat piece of ground. Of these three volcano-like hills, one is currently active



with the other two having stopped emitting some few years ago. Located on the peak of these hills are small craters



Needle-work design on Baluch women

and gray mud is emitted out of the active crater and descends down the slope on a set cycle. The cycle of eruptions is every 10-15 minutes, which is accompanied by vibration of the earth. The amount of each emission is between 3-5 litre per time and craters' position on the peak or slope of the hills usually changes each time. A sound like a gun shot is occasionally heard at the time of emission.. This natural phenomenon is one of the other attractions of the province.

Khash:

This is an old city whose foundation dates back to Nader Shah's era, and encompasses a vast and fertile plain and is one of the most important agricultural districts of the region. The famous peak of Mount Taftan, the sole remaining half-active volcano of Iran, the seasonal ponds named 'Sardarya' found in the pleasant heights next to the Mount Taftan, Heydarabad

Castle, Minaret of Jaame' mosque, facade of Towhidieh mosque with Indian stucco works and decorations, Ancient Tree of Pabid village (1,200 year old), Sangan Old Tree, Haftad Mullah Cemetery, historical cemeteries around the Taftan peak and water mills ... are all important tourist attractions of the Khash township.

Taftan Peak

From Taftan Peak one has a most impressive and panoramic view of the countryside and this is among the most important

Due to the existence of spas and mineral waters, this area has special delight for the tourist such as the Jamchin, Amani, Barab and Barabak Spas that are all located in various locations in and around Mount Taftan.

Taftan Peak, at a height of 4,050 m. is the cause of the pleasant climate of Khash and its vicinity. Another important benefit enjoyed by Khash is that it receives more rainfall in comparison with other places of the province and therefore has a rich plant cover all year round.

All of these features turn

this vicinity since ancient times. The ancient works, found in this city, show its long historical background like Mahtab Khazaneh, belongs to the 5,000 BC., Kalatek Espij, Roubahak, Milward and Seyed Omar hills, Sib (Seb) Castle, Petroglyphs of Mount Mehregan, Negaran & Koshtegan valleys.

Zabol:

Foundation of ancient city of Sistan has been attributed to Garshasb who named it Zarang at first, and which is presently been changed into Zabol. Mount Khajeh, 900m. high, like an island is placed in the middle of the Hamoon Lake, includes a Fire Temple and an enormous palace belong to the Arsacides and Sassanid eras. Dahaneh-ye Gholaman, wherein are the ruins of the valuable city, belong to the Achaemenid age. Burnt City with the collection of ancient hills, Sam Castle, Mochi Castle, Windmills, Rustam Castle, Zahedan-e Kohneh, Ghasemabad Minaret, Karkouyeh Fire Temple, Hamoon Lake and Park of Nili'eh are all many of Zabol's tourist attractions .

Mount Khajeh

With a height of 900 m. like an island, this historical and valuable attraction is placed in the middle of Hamoon Lake. There are ruins of a Fire Temple and an enormous palace at the top of this mount belonging to the first century AD. in the Sassanid and Arsacides eras. In the south part of this mount, there is a mud temple, which is known as Kouchakchal Ganjeh. This construction is worship



The window and light holes of a two storey building, Saravan

attractions of the province. From a geological viewpoint this peak dates in the Quaternary age wherein most of the volcanoes in Iran came into being. These mostly extinct volcano peaks constitute important heights in Iran today. Currently, some of those ancient volcanoes are in the sulfur producing stage and so steam and sulphuric gases are emitted from their craters. Mount Taftan is one such volcano located 50 km to the northeast of the township of Khash.

Taftan into one of the most interesting natural attractions of the province and draws many interested people from other areas, specially mountain climbers, every year.

Saravan:

This city is located in the farthest eastern portion of the province. Most of the villages in the vicinity of this city contain high quality clay, which has been used in the Kalpoorgan village to create the flourishing pottery and ceramics artisan craft of



Date clusters in the baskets made of wild palm leaves to protect them from birds, insects and wind

place of Nahid (Anahita) and is counted as a girl castle. This mount and the ancient monuments, belong to the different eras, which are located in its slope with beautiful landscapes of Hamoon Lake, are amongst the most impressive tourist attractions of this province.

Burnt City (Shahr-e Soukhteh)

It's a complex of ancient monuments located some 56 km. from Zabol. It is one of the largest and richest ancient regions in eastern Iranian plateau. This city, during its 1000-year life, was counted as a mirror of ancient Iranian civilization and rich culture from the year 3200 to 2100 BC. and also, counted as the largest city and civilization centre of east world.

Dahaneh-ye Gholaman

With an area of 100 hectares, this complex belongs to the

Achaemenid era and is located 44 km. to southeast of Zabol in area of Hamoon Lake. Gholaman (slaves in English) is the name of a natural strait in this area and it is said that it has been one of the entrances to the Iranian plateau where slave merchants traded. According to the reports of Iranian Cultural Heritage Organization, this place has been known as Shahr-e Zarrin in the Hellenic era, and then as Zarak, Zaraka, and Zaranj. This ancient area is close to the pools of Nimeh Well in Sistan and has the necessary prerequisites to become a tourist attraction.

Sarbaz:

The Sarbaz Valley and River are a pristine example of a very beautiful natural setting. The green countryside area located at the confluence of palm groves and paddy fields, with the short-muzzled Gando crocodile, that is one of the scarcest species of wild life in the world today, together all make up a very interesting

natural tourist attraction.

Nikshahr:

With its famous citrus orchards, Nikshahr has an interesting natural geography. The artifacts and other works in this area dating back to ancient times (belonging to pre-historical times), along with Nikshahr Old castle, Chehel Dokhtaran Castle, Ghasr-e Ghand Old Castle, Makr-e Zan Tree (Anjir-e Ma'abed) and... all can be considered as tourist attractions.

Iranshahr:

Iranshahr is one of the Iran's ancient cities and in past times, it has been called Fahreh or Pahreh that means large city. Nowadays, it has changed into a magnet for attracting people, industry, and agriculture to the middle of the province. Naseri (Qajar era), Bampour (Sassanid era), Daman and Chehel Dokhtar Castles and also Espidej Castle, which was the venue wherein Ashraf Afghan was murdered, on the road from Bazman to Delgan, are amongst the interesting places of the province.



The faced of a mosque in Iranshahr