

# Khuzestan

*A province with 6000 years of history & Wonderful nature*

Khuzestan is a beautiful province with wonderful nature, including many waterfalls and mountains. This land can be called the origin of many civilizations around the world.

## Introduction

Khuzestan province with an area of 64,236 Sqkm is a vast province which is located in the south - west of Iran. and north-west of Persian Gulf and bordered on Kuwiat, Iraq, Lorestan, Kermanshah, Ilam, Charmahal & Bakhtiari and Bushehr Province.

The climate in this province is almost hot, so the best time

for visiting is early in spring.

“Zagros” mountain surround Khuzestan in the west, but the middle contains jungles and waterfalls. “Karun”, one of the longest and largest rivers of Iran, passes along the province and ends in the Persian Gulf. Most cities of Khuzestan have beautiful views to Karun

River. In Khuzestan palm trees are very common.

Khuzestan is very rich in petroleum. There are many dams over rivers passing through the province which produce energy. Some Arab speaking tribe lives here. Also the “Bakhtiary” tribe lives in the mountains of north

Khuzestan.

Khuzestan Province has 15 Districts:

Ahwaz the capital of province, Abadan, Khoramshahr, Shadegan, Behbahan, Ramhormoz, Susangerd, Baghe Malek, Izeh, Masged Soleiman, Shush, Shushtar, Andimeshk and Dezful. The area which is called today Khuzestan was settled about 6000BC by a people with affinities with Sumerians, who came from the Zagros Mountains region. Urban centers appeared there nearly Contemporaneously with first cities in Mesopotamian in the 4th Millennium.

Khuzestan came to constitute the heart of the Elamite Kingdom, with Shush (Susa) as the Capital. Beginning with the reign of the legendary Enmebaragesi, about 2700BC, (according to a cuneiform inscription). despoiled the weapon of the land of Elam, Sumerian, Akkadian, Kassite, Neo-Babylonian, and Assyrian invasions periodically crossed Khuzestan in response. The Elamite involvement in Babylonian Politics; the campaign of Ashurbanipal in 639-646 B.C. destroyed the Elamite Kingdom and its capital, Shush. Incorporated into the Assyrian empire about 639, Khuzestan next passed under Achaemenid control at the collapse of Assyria, and after Cyrus the Great

Conquered Babylon in 539, It became a satrapy (prov-

ince) of Persian Empire, with Shush(Susa) serving as one of the Persians three great capitals. Alexander the Great took Susa shortly after the Battle of Gaugamela in 331, and from 311 to 148 Khuzestan was a satrapy (named Susiana) of the Seleucid empire, with its capital at Celucia on the Eulaeus River. It passed firmly into Parthian Control between 148 and 113 BC and then under Samarian rule about AD226. It was a frontier zone between the Roman-Byzantine and the Parthian- Sasanian empires



and finally was taken by the Arabs about 642. It was part of Safavid and Qajar dynasties that successively ruled Iran.

Khuzestan comprises a southeastern extension of the Mesopotamian plain and includes part of the forested Zagros Mountains to the north-east. These mountains are drained by several rivers, the most important being Karun, which flows in the Arvand River and Karkhe.

## AHWAZ

Ahwaz is Capital of wealthy Khuzestan province and bordered on cities such as Shushtar and Dezful to the north, Ramhormoz to the east, Shadegan, Bandar-e Mahshahr, Abadan, and Khorramshahr to the south. Ahwaz is situated on both banks of Karun River. Being an oil center, a transportation hub, and an industrial city with flourishing metallurgical, petrochemical, textile, sugar cane, power generating, and

food-processing industries, it occupies an area of more than 200 square kilometers. It is terribly hot and humid in spring and summer. Its population amounts to more than 1,000,000, mainly Shi'ite Muslims. Its elevation from the sea levels is only 18 meters. The best season for traveling to Ahwaz and the whole Khuzestan province is as mentioned above from January to late April.

As an ancient city, its name appears in many inscriptions of ancient Iran. Its original name,



according to archaeological evidence is said to have been Oxin. Achaemenidians called it Avaz or Avaja. During the Sassanidians period (3rd century AD), Ahwaz was rebuilt by Ardashir I, who named it Hormuzd Ardashir. In the 4th century AD, Ahwaz became a seat of bishopric, and a large church was built there. However, it was renamed to Souq al-Ahwaz following the Arab Conquest. It was an important trading center with the Arab world in the 12th and 13th centuries but later declined. During the Qajar period a harbor was built by the order of Nasser od-Din Shah (during his reign the town was called Nasseri) not far from the present location of Ahwaz on the Karun river for trading purposes, and the river was opened to foreign trade in 1888. Finally it was called Ahwaz and designated as the

capital of Khuzestan province during the reign of Reza Shah Pahlavi in 1924.

### Abadan:

Abadan is a city in the Khuzestan province in southwestern Iran (Persia). It lies on Abadan Island (68 km long, 3-19 km wide, the island is bounded in the west by the Arvand River and to the east by the Bahman-shir outlet of the Karun River), on the Arvand river 53 kilometers from the Persian Gulf, near the Iraqi-Iran border. It is the capital of Abadan County. In 2005, the population was estimated to be at 415,139. The civilian population of the city dropped to near zero during the eight-years Iran-Iraq war. In 1992, only 84,774 had returned to live in the city. By 2001, the population had jumped to 206,073, only to double in the past five years.

### Andimeshk:

Andimeshk was very small village under Dezful Administration for more than 100 years and now is small city located north of Dezful and close to Tehran-Ahwaz road. The people of city are Nicknamed to "lour" that they immigrated from lorestan state to nonce place.

### Chogha Zanbil

Chogha Zanbil is some 45-km southeast of Sush.

The ziggurat here is the best surviving example of Elamite architecture anywhere and

one of the most memorable sites in Iran. Originally it had five concentric stories but only three remain to a total height of some 25 m. It's hard to believe that such an imposing landmark could have been lost to the world for over 2,500 years, as it was until accidentally discovered during an Anglo-Iranian Oil Company aerial survey. A New Zealander officer of the company named Browne, noticed what appeared to be a high series of concentric squares on high ground near the river Dez.

### Dezful:

Extremely hot in summer, and with an elevation of 120 meters above sea level, Dezful is located 160 km to the north of Ahwaz. Its name meaning Bridge Fortress, is derived from the name of a bridge built



on the perennial Ab-e Dez or Dez river during the reign of Shapour I (242-271 AD) using Roman soldiers taken prisoner at the battle of Edessa in 260 AD. The bridge is 120 meters long and consists of twenty-two arches. Its foundation and

stone piers are Sassanian, while the arches and the roadway are more recent. The Arabs admired the bridge, calling the town al-Qantara (The Bridge), a name to stir memories of the Spanish Alcantara, from the same root. Until very recent years, the inhabitants had the sensible summer custom of retiring from their houses into an underground chamber (sardab) hewn out of the friable rock. Andimeshk City (11km) and Dez Dam (32 km) are in the vicinity of Dezful.

### Ivan e Karkheh

In a distance of 18 km from Dezful and overlooking the charming scenery along the banks of the river Karkheh, stand the ruins of this splendid brick palace from the Sassanian period.

Around the palace, there is a rampart and the monument itself possesses the remains of a large and magnificent hall, wherein the court ceremonies of the Sassanian monarchs must have been held.

### Haft Tappeh

Meaning Seven Hills, it is located 15 km to the south of Susa, and on the left of the road leaving Chogha Zanbil for Susa. Archaeological excavations on the site were carried out under the supervision of the world famous Iranian archaeologist Dr. Ezzatollah Negahban. As a result, relics of a dark period of the Elamite history (1350-

1500 BC) were unearthed. It was shown that the world's oldest vault was built here on the tomb of Tapaty Ahar (the Elamite ruler or king of Haft Tappeh) and the adjacent mausoleum. Here you can see the remains of the 2nd millennium BC Elamite town that once had several ziggurats as well as various royal buildings, tombs and temples. Although there is less to see than at Chogha Zanbil or Susa, the site here is much more spread than the other two. In a special archaeological museum (already closed because of being demolished during the Iraq-Iran War) visitors could see exclusively the objects



found at the site.

### Shush:

Susa (Shush) is 117 km north-northwest of Ahwaz via a busy and sometimes dangerous road. Although, it is on the Tehran-Ahwaz railway line, it is not practical to get there by train. Visitors starting from Ahwaz, normally leave their hotel early in the morning to arrive in Susa before the worst heat of the day. For you will find absolutely no shelter of any kind on the site, neither

is there an accommodation or a restaurant, for compared with Esfahan very few people ever come here, but tourists who do not visit Susa and the more immediately appealing ziggurat at Chogha Zanbil are missing a crucial experience of Iran.

Although an Englishman, W.K. Loftus, was the first archaeologist, in 1852, unquestionably to identify the modern Shush with the classical Susa and the Biblical Shushan, it is to a succession of French archaeologists, Dieulafoy, de Morgan, de Mecquenem, Ghirshman and Perrot, that credit is due for the systematic excavation of the site. Loftus, following the stories of travelers like Rawlinson (of Bisotun fame), Sir Austen Layard (of Neneveh fame), and the Russian Baron de Bode, started trial digs and discovered that his friend General Williams had come



across a palace similar to those of Persepolis. Cuneiform inscription proved that the palace was actually built by Darius I. Loftus describes the city, as it must have been in the great days of the Achaemenians:

It is difficult to conceive a more imposing site than Susa, as it stood in the days of its Kayanian splendor – its great citadel and columnar edifices raising their stately heads above groves of date, konar, and lemon trees – and backed by rich pastures and golden seas of corn and the distant snow-clad mountains. Neither Babylon nor Persepolis could compare with Susa in position – watered by her noble rivers, producing crops without irrigation, clothed with grass in spring, and within a moderate journey of delightful summer clime.

There is no treasure in the



**Izeh**

sense of jewels or adorning. One the spot, the site is very disappointing for those who seek fine ruins. The visitor to Susa will drive first up to the castle, which tops the acropolis on one of the four tappehs, or mounds, on which Susa was built.

Marvelous painted pottery from Susa I – the earliest Phase – was discovered here and can be seen in the castle storerooms to the Mission (and possibly more conveniently in the Louvre). Pottery dating

back to the fourth millennium BC proves that Susa was one of the oldest cities in the world.

In fact a prehistoric settlement from at least the fourth millennium BC, and an important Elamite city from about the middle of the third millennium, Susa reached its first peak under the reign of Untash Gal, who built Shush as his administrative capital and founded Choga Zanbil as his religious center. Shush was burnt around 640 BC by the Assyrian Ashurbanipal, at about the same time he destroyed Chogha Zanbil, but it came back to prominence and its Golden Age began with the advent of Cyrus the Great, the founder of the Achaemenian Empire of Iran.

Standing as it did between the Aryans of the east and the Semites of the west, Susa was a far more convenient administrative center for the new and rapidly growing Empire than was Pasargadae. Cyrus the Great probably hastened the revival of the city, which became the winter capital of the Achaemenians, while Darius I and Artaxerxes Mnemon built great palaces there.

It was from Shush that Xerxes set out on his great expedition against Greece. Although he failed in his attempt to subjugate the whole of Greece, he succeeded in despoiling both Delphi and Athens, and he deposited their wealth

in his treasury at Susa on his return there.

Alexander the Great captured the town in 331 BC. After this the Sassanian Artaxerxes I and Shapur I were the only monarchs before modern times to take an interest in Susa.



**Zigurat**

The town prospered under the latter, becoming an important center of Christianity in the 4th century AD as well as the Arabs, but steadily declined after the Mongol invasion of Iran.

Many fine examples of pottery from various periods showing the development of the typically Persian highly stylized animal motifs, as well as bronzes have been found here, and some examples are on display at Tehran's National Museum of Iran, while a famous 4th century bull's-head capital from Shush is now in the Louvre.

The site is built on four small mounds. If you enter at the gate from the street, you cannot fail to notice the fortress on top of the tallest mound, the Acropolis. This castle, quite unlike any other archaeological camp, was built by the French Archaeological Service at the

end of the 19th century as a necessary defense against the unpacified Arab tribes of the region, and is now probably the most imposing structure at Susa. Almost nothing remains of the buildings of the Acropolis on which the castle stands, which was the site of the earliest pre-historic settlement and later of the main Elamite royal buildings and then of the Achaemenian citadel.

Next to the Acropolis is the largest mound, the Royal Town, once the quarter of the court officials, which has revealed the remains of many periods from the Elamite to the Arab. Northwest of the Royal Town is the Apadana, where Darius I built his residence and two other palaces. Two very well preserved foundation tablets found beneath the site of Darius' Palace, one in Elamite and the other in Babylonia, record the noble ancestry of its founder and the far-flung origins of its materials and workers – from as far east as India to as far west as Abyssinia – as a piece of propaganda to show the might of the Achaemenian Empire at the time. The tablets are now in the Tehran's National Museum of Iran. After giving praise to the supreme God, Ahura Mazda, Darius said:

"I constructed this palace, its decoration was brought from afar... The ground was dug out until I came to the firm soil and a ditch was made...and

the gravel that was thrown in, and the bricks that were molded – they were the people of Babylon who did this work. The wood called naucina (Cedar) was brought from a mountain called Lebanon."

This inscription shows that Darius drew not only his materials, but also his workmen from all parts of his vast empire.

During the reign of Darius, many roads were constructed to serve Susa: the great Royal Road all the way west via the Tigris below Arbela and Harran to Sardis and Ephesus in Asia Minor, the road north through Lurestan to Hamadan; and a third east to the sacred city of Persepolis and Pasargadae, a part of stone-paved surface of which can be seen near Behbahan.

The remains of 72 columns and bulls'-head capitals here show that the palace was built on the same lines as that at Persepolis, constructed soon afterwards.

The Artisans' Town mound dates from the Parthian and Seleucid eras. Traces of an Arab mosque were found here, but little else of substance remains.

The museum between the entrance and the Acropolis was closed for renovation in the past years. It's open from 7 a.m. to about 2:30 p.m. (7 a.m. to noon on Thursday), daily except Friday.

## Daniel's Tomb

The reputed tomb of the Prophet Daniel, real or supposed, is situated on the east bank of the river Sha'ur; immediately to the east rises the great mound of Susa. It is a building surmounted by a pineapple cone in white plaster and it is clearly of no great antiquity. It is typical of this part of Iran and also of Iraq. If we can believe the Book of Daniel, the Prophet was closely associated with Susa during his lifetime; it was at Shushan the Palace that he had his vision of the ram with two horns, one of which was higher than the other. According to Islamic sources, the Muslim Arabs discovered the coffin containing the Prophet's remains in the castle of Susa when they occupied the city in the seventh century AD. On learning of this discovery, the Caliph Omar decreed that the river Sha'ur should be temporarily diverted and the coffin interred in the river bed; the stream was then to be allowed to resume its normal course (one may compare the story of the burial of Alaric in the bed of the Busento in Italy). Rabbi Benjamin of Tudela, who visited Susa in 1165, has a different story to tell; he claims that he saw the coffin containing the Prophet's remains suspended by chains from the center of a bridge over the river. It



would appear that while the remains had been interred on the eastern side of the river, the inhabitants on that side had enjoyed such unparalleled prosperity that it aroused the envy and jealousy of those on the west side. Feelings rose so high that fighting almost broke out, but a compromise was reached whereby the remains were interred for a year, first on the west side and then on the east side, and so on. When the Seljuk ruler Sultan Sanjar (who died in 1157 AD) heard of this arrangement, he said that it denoted a certain lack of respect for Daniel's memory,

and gave orders for the coffin to be suspended from the center of the bridge, so that those on either bank could receive equal benefit. Of these two stories the first appears to be the better founded, but we have no means of obtaining any proof. Moreover, there seems to be nothing on record as to when the Prophet's remains (if indeed, they are his) were transferred to their present resting-place in the shrine. The inhabitants of Susa and the surrounding district have, however, no doubts as to the authenticity of the remains, which they regard

as possessing remarkable curative properties, as well as the power to bring rain in time of draught.

### Shushtar :

Located 126 km to the north of Ahwaz, in an elevation of 150 meters above sea level, Shushtar is constructed on a soft rock in the upstream of which the Karun River is divided into two branches. No one knows exactly when Shushtar was founded. According to legend it was second oldest city after Susa, and probably existed in pre-Sassanian times. It was the scene of series of fabulous exploits under the aegis of Shapur I, was besieged for six months during the Arab invasion, and experienced a further wave of prosperity in Mongol times. It was not until the eighteen century that the descent began. Shushtar was the scene of extensive fighting during the Afghan wars. Half



the population perished in a plague in 1831-32. Yet by any standards Shushtar is an extraordinary place. It stands on the left bank of the Karun, a few kilometers out on the plain below the last gorge.

## Connecting Europe and Asia by train



### Bosphorus tunnel project advances with German contribution

The «Marmaray» project made an important step forward to reach its goal of connecting Europe and Asia by railway. The first of the eleven pipe parts of the two-way railway tunnel system was lowered to the seabed in March 2007.

The construction of the Marmaray Project started in October 2004. It is one of the most important construction works for Istanbul and Turkey, solving many of the huge traffic problems of the area. With the construction of the undersea-tunnel, the two shores of the Bosphorus will be connected. A railway and tunnel system of about 76 km in total, from the suburb of Halkali on the European shore to Gebze on the Asian shore will be constructed. Apart

from the tunnels and railways, the system will include three new underground stations, 37 surface stations, an operation control centre, yards, workshops, maintenance facilities and much more. All in all, approximately 75,000 passengers are to be transported every hour and in both directions, on their way from Halkali to Gebze within the maximum of 105 minutes.

The 2,5 billion EUR project, financed mainly by the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) and the European investment Bank (EIB), is being conducted by the Railways and Ports Directorate, the Japanese Taisei Corporation, GamaNurul and Avrasya Couseling.

Already in 2006, pipe parts were burrowed into the continental shelf. From the beginning, H+E Logistik, subsidiary of Herrenknecht AG with 1,500 employees around the globe and specialising in tunnel belt and conveyor system planning, construction and supply is part of this challenging project. With a conveyor length of 2.14 km and a belt width of 800 mm, H+E Logistik manages an hourly transport capacity of 540 tons of clay, sand and gravel, a belt storage capacity of 400m horizontal and an installed power capacity of 264 kW.

The project is expected to be finished in 2009, connecting the two parts of Turkey and bringing Europe and the Near and Middle East closer together.