



# Tourist Arrivals in Iran Increasing



Tourists visiting Imam Square - a key attraction of Iran's central city of Isfahan.

The number of tourists visiting Iran last year increased by above 30 percent compared to the preceding year, what could be an indication that one of the world's top travel destinations is already finding its lost flavor after the removal of sanctions. A top trade official in Tehran told domestic media that Iran hosted over 6 million tourists over the last Persian calendar year that ended on March 20, 2017, Press TV reported. Ahmad Asqari Qajari, director of the Tourism Department of Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (TCCIM), said the figure showed an increase of above 2 million compared to a year earlier. Asqari Qajari told state news agency IRNA that Iran earned around \$8 billion from tourism last year, stressing that the figure could increase even higher once the infrastructure for hosting a higher number of tourists were prepared.

Number of arrivals in Iran was reported at 5,237,000 in 2015, according to the World Bank collection of development indicators, compiled from officially recognized sources. With its ancient ruins, glittering mosques and spectacular landscapes, Iran is home to some of the world's cultural treasures, largely remained unseen by international tourists. However, steps are being taken to open up the ancient country to foreigners in an effort to improve its international image after certain hawks in the U.S. and Israel tried to demonize Iran, especial-

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ly during the Ahmadinejad presidency from 2005 to 2013. With over 20 special sites that have been registered on the World Heritage List of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Iran has been frequently named as a must-visit travel destination. The country aspires to host 20 million tourists annually by 2025, with expectations of expanding the tourist sector to \$30 billion. Iranian authorities have already unveiled sweeping plans including easing visa restrictions as well as constructing new hotels as part of efforts to attract more foreign tourists. What is believed to have helped to prepare the grounds for a higher number of tourists visiting the country has been the removal of sanctions against Iran in 2016 which facilitated direct flights specifically from European capitals.

# Iranian Cinema Wins 3700 Awards at Intl. Events after Revolution

Ever since the Islamic Revolution took place in 1979, Iranian cinema has grabbed some 3,685 awards at international events, Iranian film scholar Mohammad Atebbai said on Saturday. "This means Iranian cinema has grossed about 18 international awards every week; that is, every week the name of Iran has been acknowledged 18 times around the world," Atebbai, who is gathering information about Iran's participation in international film events, told ISNA. The awards were presented at 34,930 international events. He said that the number of awards Iranian films received at international events over the past year equals the total of

awards Iranian cineastes won between 1958 and 1998. According to Atebbai, Iranian cinema only won 152 awards at global events before the revolution. "Iranian cinema has shined remarkably at international festivals over the past two years," he said, adding that Iranian films garnered 382 awards in 2015 and

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516 awards in 2016. The films have been sent to international events by several public sectors, including the Farabi Cinema Foundation, the Institute for Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults (IIDCYA), and the Documentary and Experimental Film Center (DEFC), as well as eight private organizations and some international distributors. Atebbai also said that international distributors have helped Iranian cinema gain 50 international awards in 2016 alone. He noted that the most important awards have been gained by the films sent to international events by private organizations and international distributors.

# Iranian Structure Ranked First at Italy's A' Design Competition

Iranian architect Mohammadreza Qanei has won a golden award at the A' Design Award and Competition in the Italian city of Milan for his design of "Qanei's Residential Building in Iran", the organizers have announced. The design, a project by the Isfahan-based company Polsheer Architects, Planners and Engineers, has been implemented in a building in Isfahan, and was honored in the Architecture, Building and Structure Design Category, the Tehran Times reported. "The building is a development of the designer's old house. In this project, the designer made an attempt to maintain the fundamental skeleton and to develop a larger space for his family," the A' Design Award and Competition, explained on its website. "In the beginning, he (Qanei) designed some rooms on the roof and then a larger ceiling to cover all the contents in order to devise an integrated space for the whole

family," it says. In addition, the design named Shahr-dari (Municipality) Public Square Plaza in Rasht, also by Polsheer Architects, Planners and Engineers, is the A' Design Award Winner in the Urban Planning and Urban Design Category. All the winning designers, architects, artists and design oriented companies from around the world will be honored during a special ceremony on June 9. Iranian architects Nima and Sina Keivani have also won a silver award for their joint design "House of the Sun" in the Interior Space and Exhibition Design category of the competition. Award-winning designs will be showcased in an exhibition, which will open at MOOD -- the Museum of Outstanding Design, on June 6. Caption: Image of Qanei's House by Mohammadreza Qanei, which has won a golden award at the A' Design Award and Competition in Milan, Italy.

# Kalhor, Ghorbani to Perform in Vancouver

Iranian musician Kayhan Kalhor and singer Alireza Ghorbani will give a joint performance in Canada after their U.S. tour concluded in New York on May 13. They will travel to Canada for two performances, Iranart.ir reported. As their Canada concert slated for May 14 in Vancouver was sold out, another performance has been scheduled for May 16. The duo's concerts started on May 6 in Dallas, Texas, and on May 7, they performed in Boston. LA Times described their Boston concert as "utterly captivating." Kalhor is one of Iran's most acclaimed artists and a Grammy winner. A master of kamancheh (Persian spiked fiddle), he is widely known for his stirring improvisations, exqui-

site compositions, and extensive collaborations with international artists including Chinese American cellist Yo-Yo Ma, NY based string quartet Brooklyn Rider, American string band Kronos Quartet, Argentinean composer Osvaldo Golijov and many orchestras around the world. He has popularized Persian music in the West and is a creative force in today's international music scene. Ghorbani is a traditional vocalist who has taken part in many important festivals around the world. His warm, resonant voice has made him popular among all Persian speakers. He has participated in several important global festivals performing in many ensembles. Caption: Kayhan Kalhor (L) and Alireza Ghorbani

# Tehran Intl. Sculpture Symposium Announces Jury

The 8th edition of the Tehran International Sculpture Symposium announced its jury on Saturday. Spanish art expert Belen Romero Caballero and Iranian sculptors Raffie Davtian and Kambiz Sabri are the members of the jury. The symposium, running from April 21, ended on Sunday and the winners, in both

national and international sections, will be announced during a special ceremony at Tehran's Milad Tower. Organized annually by the Tehran Municipality's Beautification Organization, the symposium seeks to help beautify the urban environment of the city and familiarize the citizens with the process of making new designs.

# International Book Fair Sales up 18%

The 30th Tehran International Book Fair sold 18 percent more compared to the previous edition of the event, said Amir Masoud Shahramnia, deputy head of the TIBF. Going by the transactions made by POS or credit card machines, "we can say there was at least an 18 percent increase in sales. Moreover, not all the transactions were cashless; many paid cash," he said at a press briefing on May 10 in the presence of the head of Tehran International Book Fair Seyed Abbas Salehi, according to the website of Iran Cultural Fairs Institute (icfi.ir). More specifically, in the previous edition, "we sold 349 billion rials (\$9.29 million) worth of books. The figure increased to 408 billion rials (\$10.86 million) this year." The book fair also saw a 10 percent in-

crease in the number of visitors, judging by the sales of tickets at the 'Shahr-e-Aftab' subway station, the main access to the venue in south Tehran. Referring to the damages caused by heavy rainfall on May 5 to the tented pavilions at the book fair, Shahramnia expressed hope that "by taking into account the criticisms and recommendations (in the media), the next edition of the TIBF will have less problems." The 30th Tehran International Book Fair, which started on May 3 at Shahr-e Aftab Fairground, was closed on Saturday, May 13. The closing ceremony was attended by Salehi, who is also deputy culture minister, Italian Cultural Attaché Carlo Cereti and a number of Iranian cultural officials and publishers. Italy was the guest of honor at the fair this year.

# Barin, a Unique Ski Hotel in Northern Iran



An undated photo depicts the bizarre exterior of Barin Hotel in the Alborz mountain range, northern Iran. Resembling a windswept ice-rock formation, some believe it is a fierce contender for the coolest mountain hotels ever.