

Visit these attractions in Kurdistan:

Geographical and Historical State of Kurdistan Province

Kurdistan province is a wide geographic region (28,200 kilometers) located to the west of Iran adjacent to Iraq. This province is surrounded by West Azarbaijan and Zanjan provinces from the north, Hamedan province and another part of Zanjan province from the east. Kermanshah province from the south and Iraq (the Kurdish speaking province of Suleimanie) from the west.

According to the latest state divisions in 2010, this province consists of 10 cities, 23 towns, 23 districts, 49 rural districts and 1464 villages. The provincial capital of Kurdistan province is sanandaj and the main cities of this province are Baneh, Bijar, Diwandareh, saqiz, Qorveh, Kamyaran, Dehgolan, sarv-abad, and Mariwan.

Kurdistan province is a mountainous area which is extended over high plains and within vast valleys of the region.

The height difference between the highest and the lowest points is about 2000 meters. Mount shaho, 2300 meters high, and Aloo area, 900 meters high in Baneh, are respectively the highest and the lowest points of the province; this difference, in its turn, creates different kinds of climates which play a significant role in developing tourism industry and attracting tourists.

The unique topography of this province, its beautiful nature and climatic varieties have turned this area into an attractive spot to tourists. According to the world standards, temperatures between 20 and 25 degrees of Celsius are highly favored by tourists; since the average daily temperature in this province from mid-May to mid-October ranges between 22 to 28 degrees of Celsius, this period is the best time of the year for attracting summer tourists.

Owing to continuous rainfall in April and May, this area is covered in lush green vegetation; therefore, this period is considered to be the best time of the year for sight-seeing tours around the province.

Cultural Features

One of the most important attractions of the province is its cultural features such as language, ethnic music, ethnic costume, ethnic dance, festivals, celebrations, and handicrafts. People in this province speak Kurdish as their first language. The Kurdish language is a west Iranian language related to Farsi and Pashto and it is a branch of the Indo-European languages. It has its own grammatical and writing regulations as a language.

Due to the sporadic dispersion of Kurdish population and the vastness of Kurdistan ("Land of the Kurds"), this language has three main dialect groups and some sub dialects. The existence of various dialects has made this language very rich in terms of the number of vocabularies; and the melodic tone of its vocabularies has tremendously enriched the literary and musical practices.

Kurdish Clothes

Kurdistan boasts one of the most beautiful costumes in the world. As it is written by many tourists in their travel books, Kurdish costumes are absolutely unique in terms of beauty, delicacy and color. Due to their

positive attributes they have won the first place in several international festivals. Kurdish clothes , like Kurdish language, has so many varieties in different regions of the province.

Klāsh (Kurdish ethnic shoes)

In Kurdish speaking areas a type of footwear is produced which is called Klash. This type of footwear is highly suitable for mountainous areas. The features of Klash such as flexibility of its sole which is made of fabric and its lightness has made it highly suitable for mountainous areas.

Special Feasts and Festivals

One of the most popular public celebrations with Kurdish people is Nowrooz (the beginning of a new year). Kurdish people celebrate Nowrooz by making fires and dancing round it in circles. Eid-e-Fetr and Eid-e-Qorban are two significant religious feasts which are dearly favored by Kurdish people. From the other important feasts we can name Pir-Shaliar feast (an ancient traditional feast) which is held in the village of Uraman-Takht. This famous feast is celebrated twice a year. It is held both on the 1st day of spring and 1st day of winter in the village of Pir-Shaliar.

Handicrafts and Souvenirs

The handicrafts of Kurdistan province form part of its people's culture. The handicrafts are developed in the course of history according to the periodical needs of the people.

This province enjoys having various valuable handicrafts. From among the various handicrafts of this province we can name carpet-weaving and wood works which have gained world-wide popularity.

Chessboard and backgammon board are two important and delicate woodworks of this province.

The province boasts various local confectioneries such as Konjed, Badam-Sukhteh, Baslogh, and Nan-berenji. From among these confectioneries Konjed is specifically made in Sanandaj and is highly favored by customers.

Weaving Carpets and Weaving Rugs

Kurdish carpets and rugs have gained world-wide fame due to their originally Kurdish designs, colors and natural textiles used in their weaving. Bijar and Sanandaj have the best types of carpets.

Traditional Weaving or (Julai)

The fabrics used in making the ethnic costumes of Kurdish men are traditionally woven by Julais. From among the other weaving products we can name Mowj (which is used for wrapping mattresses, pillows and blankets) and Ja-Namaz (over which Kurds say their prayers).

Kurdish Music

Kurdistan is one of the richest provinces of Iran in terms of music. Due to the existence of various Kurdish music bands and experts Kurdish musicians in Kurdistan province and also due to the fame this province has gained in handicrafting musical instruments, it is considered as the cradle of music in Iran. In case we have sensible plans concerning the establishment of cultural complexes and music halls, we will be able to attract many musically-inclined tourists and hold concerts in which the music of various nations are performed.

Kurdish Dance

Kurdish dance is a mirror in which the past history of Kurdish people is completely reflected. Taking a closer look at Kurdish dance, we would find out that this art is a complete reflection of people's daily life and work. The roots of this art could be traced back into the people's religious beliefs, national festivals and celebrations, local games of war and defense, and spiritual and inner feelings and moods. Kurdish dance has so many varieties throughout Kurdistan, but Sanandaj and Mariwan are two famous and rich cities regarding Kurdish dance. Although modern electrical instruments are widely used these days, traditional ones are still in use.

Musical Instruments

Kurdistan province is tremendously successful in handicrafting musical instruments and this potential is due to two significant reasons: abundance of high quality wood and affluence of musical talents among Kurdish people to teach and learn music.

From among the other handicrafts which are produced in this province we can name stone products, basket weaving, ornaments, leather products and wooden products such as Pipe, Hubble-Bubble, chessmen, and make-up box.

Sanandaj City

Sanandaj is the provincial capital of Kurdistan province whose distance from the southwest of Tehran is about ۶۱۲ Kilometers. This city is located at an altitude of ۱۴۸۰ Kilometers. Sanandaj was built in ۱۰۴۶ A.H. in the era of Safavid dynasty and King Sari by Sulaiman-Khan-e Ardalani. The word 'Sanandaj' is the Arabized form of 'Senah Dezh. The people of this province still call it by this name, Senah. Due to its centrality in the past, Sanandaj boasts mosques, monuments, historical buildings and an ancient market ; these places are still considered as some of the main attractions of the province.

Attractions of Sanandaj:

Jame Mosque

This mosque is placed in the northern side of Imam Khomeini St. The mosque dates back to Qajar dynasty and was built by Amanollah Khan, the Governor of the province in ۱۲۲۸ A.H. This mosque has two halls and a central yard around which some chambers are built for theology students.

Abidar Recreational Center

This center is located to the west of Sanandaj at the end of Abidar St. on Abidar's mountainside. Sanandaj city has a very beautiful view from this center. There are several gardens and natural springs in this center. One of the biggest gardens of this center is called Amirieh garden in which there is the biggest outdoor cinema screen of the country. This center has long been a place of recreation for Sanandaji people and it is very popular with them.

Sanandaj Bazaar

This bazaar is stretched on both sides of Enghelab street . it was built in ۱۹۴۶ A.H. when Ardalani governors , who were then in power , were settled in sanandaj (the center of their government) . The plan of this bazaar was in the form of a big rectangular which was then divided in two parts during Pahlavi dynasty . the northern part is called Asef bazaar . Although new shopping centers have been built in sanandaj , this bazaar is still considered as a commercially valuable center .

The Kurd House (asef mansion)

The houses of Kurds is an anthropological museum of Kurdish regions . this museum is one of the biggest anthropological and ethnic museums in Iran . it is located on Imam – Khomeini ST. in Sanandaj . This museum is situated in Asef mansion . This mansion is one of the grandest royal mansions of Sanandaj city. Its architectural assets are the brickwork , plastework and Oroosies (Windows whit colorful glasses) . The private bath of this mansion is considered as the most attractive one among the other baths of sanandaj . This building was first built in safavid period and then completed in Qajar and Pahlavi periods .

Sanandaj Museum

It is located in Habibi Alley on Imam Khomeini St. This museum is situated in the exterior part of molla Lotfollah Sheikhol Eslam's mansion. In this mueum historical objects which have been excavated in the province or the other parts of Iran are exhibited. The Oroosie work of this museum is one of the matchless samples of Oroosie works in Sanandaj and they are made by Sanandaji Artists.

Khosroabad Mansion

This mansion is on Khosroabad Boulevard. It is a unique building which was once the center of ardalani Governors, especially Khosro Khan Ardalan.

The mansion with its garden has two main parts: the royal palace to the west of the building with a pillared entrance and the eastern part with pillared porch which overlooks the outer area of the mansion. In addition to these two main parts there are also other parts such as bath, servant and doormen's room. From among the architectural assets of this mansion we can name the brickwork, Oroosies and the cross – shaped pond which is inside the mansion.

Vakil Mansion

This mansion is on Keshavarz St It consists of three yards with their related buildings, a private bath inside the mansion , and a public one outside of it The main part of Vakil Mansion is built in Zandiyeh period and the other parts are built in Qajar period. The central part of it has a gable roof which arch-shaped.

Moshir Diwan Mansion

This mansion is on Shohada St. It consists of three yards with their related areas and a private bath inside the mansion. Each yard also has a fountain. This mansion was built by Mirza Yousef Moshir Diwan in Qajar period. The most beautiful porch in Sanandaj whose roof is arch-shaped belongs to this mansion.

Khan Bath

This bath is to the northern side of Sanandaj's old bazaar, on Enghelab St. The interior decorations of this bath and the frescos drawn on the walls are really unique. This bath was built in ۱۲۲۰ A.H. under the order of Amannollah Khan Ardalan. This bath is the biggest and most beautiful one among the other baths of Sanandaj.

Hajar-e-Khatoon Shrine

This shrine is in an old alley which is called Sartapollah on Salahedin Ayoobi St. According to the religious records this revered offspring of an Imam(Imam Zadeh) was the sister of Imam Reza, who passed away on her way to Khorasan and then was buried in this area.

Nearby this shrine there is a mosque and also there are some tombs in which some great people of Sanandaj and Sheikhs are buried.

Pir-Omar Shrine

This shrine is on the southern side of Imam Khomeini St. It is built in ۱۰۴۶ A.H. It is believed that Pir Omar was the son of Hazrat-e- Ali. The building includes brick decorations, plaster works, and beautiful Orsies.

Pir-Mohammad Shrine

This shrine is on Nabowat square. It is located above a hill which was the old cemetery of Sanandaj. This shrine is the burial place of Mohammad-ebne- Yahya who was called Pir-Omar.

Negel Qoran

This well-known Koran is kept in the village of Negel which is ٦٠ kilometers away from the west of Sanandaj, between Sanandaj and Mariwan. This book is handwritten and as it is believed it dates back to the period of the third Khalif. It is believed that it is one of the four Korans which were written in that period and sent to different parts of the world. Its size is big. It has a leather cover and its pages are sheets of thick parchment.

This Koran has been written in Kufi style which is punctuated. In some parts of this Koran the numbers of the verses are gilded and decorated with planet designs.

Mystical Ceremonies

Another attraction of Sanandaj is the mystical ceremonies which are held weakly in some Khanghahs (Islamic Convents) of this city.

Mysticism is a deep-rooted tradition in Kurdistan province and since the third century Kurdish people have dearly adored this tradition. Sanandaj boasts ٦٠ Khanghahs; These Khanghahs are the resort of the congregation in which they congregate to hold religious ceremonies.

There are two main branches of mysticism in Kurdistan province:

- **Ghaderieh Branch:** Followers of this branch are the disciples of Sheikh Abdolghadere Gilani. They attempt to find truth through religious ceremonies in which they dance to the sound of the Daf till they are totally rapt in the mystically religious atmosphere of the ceremony.
- **Naghshbandi Branch:** Followers of this branch are the disciples of Molana Bahaeddin Mohammad-e-Bokharayee. They try to find truth through silence and profound thinking.

Gheshlagh Dam

This dam is ٢٠ Kilometers away from the northern part of Sanandaj, beside the road which leads to Saqiz. This dam is constructed over Gheshlagh river. As a result a lake is made behind this dam which is ١١ Kilometers long and covers an area of ٩٢٤ hectares. This lake is a good resort for water sports and makes one of the natural attractions of Sanandaj.

The ancient castle of Ziwiyeh

This castle is built on a hill which is located to the south-east of this city. It is ۰۰ kilometers away from the city and looks over the surrounding area. A lot of things have been written about the importance and greatness of this hill. Many precious objects have been dug up through a series of excavations most of which have been done illegally. Most of these excavated items are kept in foreign museums . From among the precious objects found in this burial site we can name two pieces of painted ivory on which animal pictures and fabulous hunting scenes are carved out, a gold necklace and a gold eagle head which are of great value.

The City of Mariwan

Mariwan is located to the west of the province, ۱۲۰ Kilometers away from the Northwest of Sanandaj. It is about ۱۰۰ years old.

Farhad Mirza, who was one of the governors of this area during Qajar period before Mashrooatiat revolution, built a castle which is called Shahpoor Castle , and due to the existence of this castle this city was formally called dezh-e-Shahpoor (ShahpoorCastle) till ۱۳۴۴.

In ancient texts the word Mariwan is made of two words Mehr and Wan which means 'the place of kindness'. The beautiful lake of Zeriwar, beautiful forests and the average precipitation rate of ۸۰۰ mm have turned this area into an attractive center.

This city has got a common border with Iraq and enjoys a frontier market by the name of Bahsmagh. These two assets have added to the attractions of this area so that the number of tourists and travelers is increasing each year.

Zeriwar lake

This lake is one of the most beautiful spots of the province which is located to the west of Mariwan, two kilometers away from it. It is ۴.۰ kilometers long and ۲ kilometers wide. Its average depth is about ۳ meters. What is considerable about the lake is that there are fresh-water springs at the bottom of the lake providing its water. No river flows into the lake, so it is known as the biggest fresh water spring in the world. This lake is surrounded by dense jungles which make very beautiful scenery in this area. Owing to

the coldness of the weather in winter, the surface of the lake freezes. This frozen lake has a very beautiful view in winter.

The Ancient Cave of Karaftoo

This cave is ٦٠ kilometers away from the north of Diwandareh, near a village which is called Youz Bash Kandy. It is one of the most attractive places of the province. This calcareous and natural cave has been changed in different areas because it has been used as a living place. The most important feature of the cave is its rocky architecture. It is a four-storey cave which is dug in the mountain.

There is a Greek epigraph over the entrance of one of the rooms on the third floor which introduces the cave as Hercules's temple.

Saral Region

This is one of the echo-touristy regions of the province which is located to the west of Diwandareh.

Chelcheshmeh Region

Chelcheshmeh Mountains are located to the northwest of Diwandareh. This region attracts so many tourists and mountaineers.

The Town of Sarv-Abad

This area has recently become a city. It is located to the east of Sanandaj, ٩٥ kilometers away from it. It has so many natural attractions and the villages of this area are untouched. Some of the most beautiful landscapes of the province can be observed in this area, especially during summer.

Attractions of Sarv-Abad:

Rural regions are the most appealing attractions of this area. From among the rural regions we can name Uraman region whose center is Uraman- Takht.

Uraman/Hawraman

Uraman region covers a wide area between Mariwan, Sarv-Abad, Kamyaran, and Paweh (in Kermanshah province). This region is one of the most beautiful areas of the country. The mountains of this region are covered with beautiful forests and the great river of Sirwan passes through them. The word Uraman consists of two parts: 'Hora' which means 'Ahoora' and 'Man' which means 'Home',so the word Uraman means the home of Ahoora Mazda. In Avesta the word 'Hor' means 'sun', so it is also believed that 'Uraman' means the home of the sun.

Uramaneh- Takht

This village is the center of Uraman region, which is located to the southwest of Sarv-Abad. The houses of this village are frequently made of stone, and the continuous pattern of the houses which are built over steep mountainsides resembles a staircase. This village is known as 'the city of Uraman' among the inhabitants of the region. They believe that this village has once been a big city. From among the specific features of this area we can name the special architecture of the area, special religious ceremonies such as Pir- Shalyar Ceremony, the mosque and shrine of Pir-Shalyar and its considerable population.