

Nowruz-e Darya Festival Honors Qeshm’s Maritime Heritage



TEHRAN -- As the warm winds of late summer sweep through the Persian Gulf, Qeshm Island—Iran’s largest island—is celebrating a unique cultural event with a modern twist: the Nowruz-e Darya (Sea New Year) Festival, running from September 11 to October 22.

Far from being just another seaside festival, Nowruz-e Darya is a vibrant convergence of seafaring heritage, ecological mindfulness, and local pride, aimed at transforming Qeshm into one of the region’s leading eco-tourism destinations.

Rooted in the centuries-old maritime calendar used by communities along the Persian Gulf, Nowruz-e Darya honors the cultural rhythms that once dictated everything from fishing cycles to religious rituals. It’s a rare window into a way of life shaped by tides, stars, and seasonal winds—one that festival organizers are determined to preserve.

“This isn’t just a celebration,” says Azadeh Abedinzadeh, head of Qeshm’s cultural heritage and tourism. “It’s an act of cultural continuity—honoring who we were, who we

are, and how we can protect both our heritage and our environment moving forward.”

This year’s edition has expanded to include everything from traditional music, boat processions, and storytelling, to eco-conscious workshops, community-led art projects, and sustainable development showcases. The festival is designed with zero-waste principles, encourages local business involvement, and actively promotes responsible tourism across the island’s protected ecosystems.

“Qeshm isn’t just a beautiful island—it’s an environmental and cultural treasure,” says Abedinzadeh. “Our goal is to share that with the world without compromising what makes it special.”

With its UNESCO-listed Geopark, wild mangroves, and historic seafaring roots, Qeshm offers an increasingly rare kind of travel experience: immersive, educational, and grounded in place. Nowruz-e Darya plays a critical role in that vision—drawing thousands of visitors each year, both from within Iran and abroad.

Dubai Celebrates First-Ever Iran Fest, Drawing Thousands



TEHRAN/DUBAI -- On a vibrant Saturday, the South Halls of Dubai Exhibition Center (DEC) came alive with the sounds and colors of Iran during the inaugural Iran Fest—a joyous celebration of Iranian culture, music, and tradition.

Drawing thousands of Iranians living in the UAE, the event showcased the rich heritage of a community deeply woven into the fabric of the Emirates.

The festival’s heartbeat was its lineup of renowned performers. From the soulful vocals of Homayoun Shajarian to the rhythmic beats of Karzan Qasemi and the masterful melodies of Ali Ghamsari, the stage was a magnificent tribute to Iran’s musical legacy.

For many attendees like Fatemah Ranjbar, who was born and raised in the UAE, the fest was a proud, emotional moment. “Seeing our culture celebrated on such a grand scale, and for free, is incredible,” she shared. “Homayoun Shajarian performing here—after his shows at Dubai Opera—makes this truly special.”

Beyond music, Iran Fest offered a rich tapestry of experiences. Visitors explored stalls brimming with traditional Iranian handicrafts, paintings, and exquisite

cuisine, immersing themselves in the vibrant artistry of the region.

One highlight was the family-run Milan Couture stall, representing a legacy of Iranian entrepreneurship that spans over six decades in the UAE. Founder Abdul Aziz reflected fondly on the journey: “Our first shop was in Naif Souq. Watching the UAE grow alongside us has been extraordinary.”

The festival was more than a cultural showcase—it was a symbol of the deep bonds between the UAE and Iran. In his heartfelt speech, Sheikh Nahyan bin Mubarak Al Nahyan, UAE Minister of Tolerance and Coexistence, emphasized this connection.

“We reaffirm the deep and enduring friendship between Iran and the UAE,” he said, applauded by the crowd. “Our peoples have traded, shared stories, interwoven families, and worked side by side for peace and stability.”

An intriguing highlight was the display of Pahlavani, a traditional Iranian martial art involving weighted wooden maces. Introduced to the UAE by fitness center OSI, it’s a rare and dynamic workout that combines strength, mobility, and history—a fitting nod to preserving cultural heritage in modern times.

Iran’s Pavilion at China’s CITIE Expo Earns Top Honors

TEHRAN -- In its debut at the prestigious CITIE International Tourism Exhibition in Guangzhou, China, the Iran Pavilion captured the spotlight—and the top honor.

Celebrated for its masterful blend of historical elements, deep cultural resonance, and exquisite aesthetic design, the pavilion drew an exceptional crowd, leaving a lasting impression on visitors and organizers alike.

According to the Public Relations Office of the Touring & Automobile Club of the Islamic Republic of Iran—the body responsible for curating Iran’s presence at the event—the pavilion was awarded the “Best Booth” accolade in a formal ceremony.

The CITIE exhibition’s deputy director presented the award to Muhammad Hussein Soofi, Director of Iran’s Tourism Pavilion and CEO of the Touring & Automobile Club, recognizing the vibrant and enthusiastic participation of Iran at this key global tourism event.

Soofi expressed his delight, highlighting that the success was a collective effort: “Thanks to the dedicated teamwork across our organization, we em-



phasized not only aesthetic appeal but also cultural and civilizational themes, engaging visitors with interactive experiences that set our pavilion apart.”

He added that Iran’s participation significantly boosted visitor numbers, underlining the expo as a valuable platform for showcasing Iran’s rich heritage and tourism potential.

During discussions with CITIE leadership, Soofi proposed strategic enhancements for future editions, including separating economic and trade negotiations from cultural displays and performances.

This suggestion aims to streamline the visitor experience and better support specialized travel agencies, a proposal warmly received by the organizers.

Featuring eight leading travel and tourism companies, a traditional crafts artist, a display of authentic Persian garments, and interactive workshops on Iranian culture, the pavilion offered a multifaceted glimpse into Iran’s vibrant traditions and civilization. Its broad appeal made it one of the most visited and media-covered booths at the exhibition, earning praise from both local and national Chinese press.

From Lullabies to Symphonies: The Legacy of Soudabeh Salem

TEHRAN -- In an age where childhood is shaped by screens and fast content, Iranian composer and educator Soudabeh Salem is listening for a different sound: the voice of a child singing. And she believes every one of those voices matters.

At a tribute marking the ninth anniversary of the International Virtual Museum of Children’s Art Sunday, Salem was honored not just for her decades-long career in children’s music, but for something much deeper—her mission to revive Iran’s ancient musical heritage for the youngest generation.

The event, hosted at the Museum of Iranian Music, featured a screening of Raavi-ye Baad (The Wind’s Narrator), a 43-minute documentary tracing her life, vision, and creative journey.

Salem, who came of age in Tehran’s National Conservatory and later studied at the University of Tehran, has spent her career digging into Iran’s intangible cultural heri-

tage—from lullabies and traditional rhymes to playful vocal games passed down for centuries. But her approach is anything but nostalgic.

“Each time a child sings, our culture comes alive again,” she told the crowd. “My duty has always been to hear these voices, value them, and connect children to their cultural roots through the power of sound.”

She’s not just talking theory. Over the years, Salem has formed children’s orchestras, led music therapy projects with UNICEF, taught across institutions, and even taken her ensembles to post-earthquake Bam to use music as healing.

Her method—part education, part preservation, and part emotional empowerment—leans heavily into play, spontaneity, and collaboration. In her world, children aren’t passive listeners. They’re performers, co-creators, and storytellers.

At the tribute, poet and long-time collaborator Afsaneh Shabannezhad remembered how Salem trans-



formed a simple six-line poem into a full-fledged stage performance using children’s voices and instruments.

“Her work isn’t just about music,” Shabannezhad said. “It’s about giving kids the confidence to express themselves.”

The night included traditional music performances, tributes from cultural figures, and messages from

artists and educators across Iran. But it was Salem’s words that echoed loudest: “Let’s dream of a world where peace and music are not privileges, but birthrights—for every child.”

For Salem, every child’s song is the start of a symphony. And she’s making sure that symphony keeps playing.

Iranian Films Shine Bright on Global Festival Circuit

TEHRAN -- September marks a vibrant month for Iranian cinema on the global festival circuit, with a diverse array of films and events spotlighting the country’s cinematic heritage and contemporary voices across four continents.

Paymon Shahbod’s The Last Move (Plan Akhar-e Bazi) has been officially selected for the 41st Boston International Film Festival (September 18–22, 2025).

The film, which previously competed at the 42nd Torino Film Festival in Italy, navigates the intertwined lives of a celebrated actor’s return to cinema and the creative forces behind the camera.

Shahbod’s narrative explores themes of memory, artistic collaboration, and the search for new meaning in life’s “final takes.” The cast features Marjan Qamari, Atabak Naderi, Maryam Ghasemi, among others. International distribution is managed by Daryacheh Cinema.

Meanwhile, The Last Romance (Akharin Asheghaneh), directed by Asal Javanmardi and produced by Mehdi Karami Tabrizi, will compete at the inaugural CineFem International Women’s Film Festival in Uruguay (September 17–21, 2025).

Dedicated exclusively to films made by or about women, CineFem’s programming reflects urgent gendered perspectives in contemporary cinema. The film stars Seyed Naser Jalali, Hoorieh Khosravi, and Niloufar Pourmahdi, telling the poignant story of Hoori, a blind middle-aged woman in rural Iran who clings to hope for her missing fiancé’s return after 33 years—an evocative meditation on love, loss, and resilience.

On the documentary front, Hadi Afarideh’s Hollein in Iran enters the competition at Spain’s Film

Travel Award Festival in Barcelona (September 26–28, 2025).

The festival foregrounds films that engage with themes of travel, sustainable tourism, and cultural dialogue.

Afarideh’s film offers a lyrical exploration of Iran’s architectural heritage through the lens of the Austrian architect Hans Hollein, weaving past and present in a cinematic conversation that bridges Iranian culture with a global audience.

The documentary’s team includes

voiceover artists Mahnaz Afzali and Shahram Derakhshan, cinematographer Reza Teymoori, and sound professionals Shahin Pourdadashi and Mehrshad Malakouti, with production supported by Iran’s Center for Documentary, Experimental and Animated Cinema.

Adding a retrospective dimension to the month’s Iranian cinematic presence, the 11th Zurich Iranian Film Festival (September 17–20) celebrates the nation’s rich film his-

tory with screenings of three classics: Masoud Kimiai’s The Deer (Gavaznha), Forough Farrokhzad’s The House is Black (Khaneh Siah Ast), and Ali Hatami’s Mother (Madār).

Complementing these screenings, the festival will host a masterclass by Amin Jafari, a prominent figure in Iranian cinematography, providing insight into the visual language that has shaped decades of Iranian film artistry.

Picture of the Day



Dasht Naz Agricultural Company in Sari spans 3,000 hectares of farmland, 300 hectares of reservoirs, and 13 hectares of modern greenhouses, the largest agro-industrial unit in northern Iran.

Photo by IRNA