

## **The Conservation of Silk Road Caravansary Buildings in Iran**

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There are an estimated 2000 caravansary buildings still extant in Iran today that were mostly built in the Safavid Dynasty era some of which were an integral part of the ancient Silk Road from China to Europe and Africa.

The Iranian National Heritage, Tourism, & Handicrafts Organization has recently commenced renovating a number of caravansary buildings with a view of leasing them over for exploitation to the Private Sector. So far some 35 such projects are in various stages of exploitation.

The Iranian Chapter of ICOMOS believes that it would be a worthwhile project to select a number of unrestored caravansaries that are situated along the Silk Road and obtain long leases thereon in conjunction with a Private Sector company. This entity would then bring students and experts from America and Europe to research and supervise the historical renovation of these properties and also find innovative ways to transform them into tourist destinations as hotels within the constraints of their historical structure and importance.

After the renovation the private entity could operate the hotels as a chain and from its revenue continue the program. The estimated financing required for the renovation of each property is approximately \$2 million US dollars and initially some eight (8) properties could be started to give economics of scale to the operation.