

WORLD HISTORICAL CITIES



The League of Historical Cities Bulletin

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Sheki – pearl of Azerbaijan



City view

Sheki is located in the north-west part of Azerbaijan, in the southern foothills of the Greater Caucasian mountain range and 632 m above sea level. Sheki has an area of 2,430 km², and a population of 180,000. Sheki is considered as an outstanding political, social-economic and cultural center of the north-west part of Azerbaijan. Its beautiful nature, climate, historical and cultural monuments, positive customs, unique craft activities, and delicious cuisine are of great importance, particularly in the area of development of tourism sector internationally.

The existence of historical and cultural monuments is one of the main reasons that Sheki is famous as an ancient place of Azerbaijan. Sheki Khans' palace, New Sheki Fortress, House of Sheki Khans', The minaret of the Mosque Gilehli, Oval temple, Agvanlar Bathhouse, Upper and Lower Caravansaries, the remains of "Gelersen gorersen" castle, temple of Zeyzid in Orta Zeyzid village, tomb in Babaratma village, Albanian temple in Kish village and others are important, especially in terms of architectural features. Sheki has 84 historical and cultural buildings which are protected by the state. The 250 year anniversary of Sheki Khans' Palace was celebrated in 2012. Starting in 2012 a "City Day" event has been organized each year based on the initiative of the Mayor of Sheki Mr. Elkhan Usubov.

Today Sheki is a unique place preserving the

town-building culture of medieval centuries. Unique historical architectural monuments-caravansaries, mosques, minarets, houses, fortress, and bridges show us Sheki's old architectural style. Currently the modernization of the city by preserving its national architectural style is the main task.

President of Azerbaijan Republic His Excellency Mr. Ilham Aliyev often visits Sheki, attends various opening and groundbreaking ceremonies and has issued several decrees for promotion of social-economic development of the city. In his speeches His Excellency stated the importance of careful approach and responsibility to the national historical values and emphasized the role of Sheki in the history of Azerbaijan and state building process. As a result of special attention of His Excellency to Sheki all the historical buildings have been restored based on their original structure and appearance.

President of Heydar Aliyev Foundation, Goodwill Ambassador of UNESCO and ISESCO, member of Parliament (Milli Meclis), and the First lady of Azerbaijan, Her Excellency Mrs. Mehriban Aliyeva has had an outstanding role in the protection and promotion of national cultural heritage, as well as education, health and sports in Azerbaijan.

Considerable work has been done to develop tourism in Sheki. Beautiful nature, unique historical-cultural monuments, crafts industry, cultural heritage and hospitable people are advantages of Sheki for the tourism sector. Currently hotels "Sheki Olympic", "Sheki Saray", "Sheki Palace", "Green Hill Inn" are operated in the city, "Sheki Park", "Resting and Health center", "Paradise garden" are working in Kish village. Construction of "Markhal" resting complex and 4 stars "Monolit D Plaza" hotel continues.

People of Sheki have preserved their unique traditions and craft skills. The main types of crafts are "kelagayi" (silk headscarf) production, embroidery, wood carving, coppers, jewellers, traditional style mosaic (shebeke), confectioners, preparation of national musical instruments, and etc. Art of making "kelagayi" has been included to the representative list of Intangible Cultural Heritage of UNESCO. The unique Sheki cuisine is also famous in Azerbaijan and is a part of local culture.

International festivals became a tradition in Sheki. High level events are very important for the promotion of the rich cultural heritage and tourism potential of Sheki.

Every year national horse riding games festival and "Chovkan" national competition are organized by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism jointly with the Executive Administration of Sheki which is dedicated to the memory of national leader Heydar Aliyev. "Chovkan" competition is included in the UNESCO List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in



Festival of Confectionaries

Need of Urgent Safeguarding. These events have a positive role in promotion of equestrian tourism.

The “**Silk Road**” International Music Festival is organized in Sheki each summer and it leaves unforgettable memories for the audience. A variety of best examples of world music, including Azerbaijani, Japanese, Indian, Chinese, Turkish, Korean, Russian, Iranian national theater, music, dance and folk performances create festive mood.

Last year The First Sheki International **Theater Festival** was organized jointly by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Executive Administration of Sheki and Azerbaijan Union of Theatrical Figures. The festival was conducted over 10 days and gathered well known theater groups from various countries, as well as from Azerbaijan. It is planned to organize this festival once every two years and is considered to be an outstanding cultural event-theater holiday for Sheki.

For the occasion of the First European Games in Azerbaijan in 2015, Sheki hosted a spectacular **Festival of the Torch Relay and Flame**.

Another interesting event- the International **Festival of Confectionaries** is held in Sheki each year based on the initiative of the Mayor of Sheki Mr. Elkhan Usubov. The festival hosts the confectionery products prepared by Turkish,

Russian, Mongolian, Georgian, Kirgiz, Korean, as well as confectionaries from 23 districts of Azerbaijan.

This year in August Sheki hosted the “**Nagara 2015**” International Drum Festival for the first time in Azerbaijan as well as in Caucasus region. Musicians from Turkey, Iran, Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan showed their best performances.

Sheki has hosted the **Caucases Motofestival** 4 times. This year exhibition and fair of motorbikes and accessories, souvenirs representing Azerbaijani culture were organized in the opening days of the festival. The participants- more than 200 bikers from various countries, including Azerbaijan, US, UK, Turkey, Russia, Georgia, Croatia, Iran and others passed through the streets of Sheki with their national flags. The closing of festival accompanied with gala concert with participation of famous world stars (Lady Gaga and etc).

Sheki being one of the oldest and most beautiful cities of Azerbaijan and is well known for being outstanding in the contemporary history of Azerbaijan.

Written by Ms. Gulnaz Salamova
Deputy chairman of Sheki Municipality



Drum festival



Silk Road V International Music Festival

Greetings from the Kashan Mayor



Seyyed Mohammad Nazem Razavi
The Mayor of Kashan City
E-Mail: Mayor@Kashan.ir

On behalf of the city and county of Kashan, it is with great pleasure that I welcome you to Kashan, a beautiful and historic city dating back several thousand years. Kashan is a historical city with several hundred ancient monuments, handicrafts, rituals, dialects and where the people are friendly and hospitable. Kashan is also a tourist, industrial and commercial city and it has become a great opportunity for investment.

I honestly and proudly invite mayors, authorities, tourists, investors and all classes to visit our beautiful city of Kashan and to this end I once again commend the League of Historical Cities (LHC) for choosing Kashan as its new historical member.

With warmest regards,
Nazem Razavi, Mayor





The Louvre in Paris - Sialk Chalice
©2007 RMN/Franks Raux

The City of Kashan, Iran

Kashan is located 258 km to the south of Tehran (The capital of Iran) and its population is about 300,000. A part of this township is located in a vast plain and the other part in a mountainous area. The central heights of the country cross this township. The climate of the township, like other central parts of Iran, is changeable depending on topography of the region. The mountainous areas are cold and the plain areas, especially desert margin, are warm. Kashan is one of the oldest cities of Iran. The etymology of the city name comes from the Kasian, and archeological discoveries in the Sialk Hillocks, which lie 4 km west of Kashan, reveal that this region was one of the primary centers of civilization in pre-historic ages. The artifacts uncovered at Sialk reside in the Louvre in Paris and the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art, and Iran's National Museum.

It was a thriving city in Islamic period.



Traditional skills of carpet weaving in Kashan
© 2009 by ICHHTO



Shahzadeh Ebrahim Monument
© 2015 by Shooka Daeiyeh

The local architecture of the city is unique and very interesting. The presence of a wide variety of houses, shrines, mosques, a historical Bazaar and other historical sites have added to the glory of Kashan. Some of the most important cultural sites and traditions are Sialk ancient hills, Fin garden and old houses, carpet washing ceremony at Mashhad Ardehal, Kashan rosewater, Kashan carpets, wonderful desert, Nooshabad underground city, Niasar waterfalls, Qamsar and Barzok rose centers and many more.

Some of the Kashan registered historical-cultural rituals and ancient monuments with UNESCO, are the traditional skills of carpet weaving in Kashan, the carpet washing ceremony at Mashhad Ardehal and the Fin Garden.

The most important ancient monument and rituals of the city are featured on this page.



Sultan Amir Ahmad Bathhouse
©2015 by Shooka Daeiyeh



Fin Garden
© 2015 by Seyyed Mahdi Razavi Zadeh



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Ballarat and UNESCO's historic urban landscape approach (HUL)



IMAGE 1 CR SAMANTHA MCINTOSH, DR RON VAN OERS (FORMER VICE-DIRECTOR WHITRAP) AND ANTHONY SCHINCK (CEO) SIGNING ON TO THE UNESCO HISTORIC URBAN LANDSCAPE PILOT PROGRAMME, SEPTEMBER 2013.

City of Ballarat, Australia

In 2011 the UNESCO General Conference (member states from around the world) adopted the *Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape*. UNESCO's historic urban landscape (HUL) approach provides a road map for the sustainable development of dynamic historic cities around the world. It has been developed to help cities effectively respond to contemporary challenges including rapid urbanisation, globalisation, population growth, unsustainable tourism, climate change and degradation of the environment.

The historic urban landscape approach 'integrates the goals of urban heritage conservation and those of social and economic development'.¹ It recognises the critical role of public, private and civic sectors – particularly local authorities and local citizens – in ensuring that their distinctive local culture, local values and local features are a key point of departure for the management and development of their city. Each city's tangible and intangible heritage is seen as a social, cultural and economic asset for its sustainable development.²

UNESCO recognised the prominent role that the League of Historical Cities could play in disseminating and supporting this new best-practice approach through its extensive membership of local authorities and their citizens. To this end a message introducing the historic urban landscape approach from the UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Culture was presented to members of the League of Historical Cities during the proceedings of the 13th World Conference in Hue, Vietnam, April 2012.

Immediately following the World Conference in Hue the City of Ballarat began to work towards

adoption of the historic urban landscape approach. Shortly afterwards we were invited to join an international pilot programme and signed a *Strategic Cooperation Agreement* with UNESCO category 2 centre, the World Heritage Institute of Training and Research in Asia and the Pacific (WHITRAP) Shanghai, China, in September 2013. This event made the City of Ballarat the first local authority to become a signatory to implement the HUL globally.

Ballarat's agreement with WHITRAP outlines a number of requirements: the concept and objective of the HUL approach, cooperation activities (research, hosting an international symposium and development of an implementation strategy) and publications (international journals and reports to UNESCO's Executive Board and General Conference). WHITRAP has provided an international network and platform for Ballarat's research, training, conservation and development whilst the City of Ballarat has provided opportunities to apply the historic urban landscape approach, funded and supported a number of activities and implemented the approach across our organisation. We have also worked with a number of project partners including Universities, and the private and public sector, to build the reach of the historic urban landscape approach in Australia and develop new tools to help us evolve and integrate our practice.³

A number of League of Historical Cities members are now involved in the WHITRAP pilot programme, either directly or non-directly. In addition to Ballarat, the city of Varanasi in India is involved in the pilot programme through a partnership with the World Bank and Cities Alliance. Edinburgh in Scotland is connected to the pilot programme through local charity, Edinburgh World Heritage. Whilst not a direct signatory to the pilot, Edinburgh World Heritage supports the historic urban landscape rollout in their work as well as sharing lessons learned with other cities through WHITRAP and other UNESCO activities. Most recently League of Historical Cities member and UNESCO World Heritage city, Cuenca in Ecuador, joined the WHITRAP pilot programme. WHITRAP's pilot is facilitating the multinational cooperation between local authorities⁴ required by the historic urban landscape approach. Ballarat, Cuenca and other pilot cities have been taking part in international activities established by UNESCO and WHITRAP, sharing their experiences and building relationships.

For Ballarat the historic urban landscape approach promises to ensure that future growth and change in Ballarat is dealt with in a more integrated, sophisticated and sustainable way. Being a part of the pilot programme has enabled us to tap into best practice expertise and global city experiences. We

believe that the HUL can help our city grow without compromising our distinctiveness. This is our point of difference and the key to how we can sustain our future in this increasingly competitive and globalised world.

Ballarat has a long and rich history and it is still here and growing. The success of Ballarat has been built on many influences and today it is a city with a legacy gifted by many people.⁵ Ballarat's natural heritage was formed over 500 million years ago while our rich cultural heritage began over 40,000 years ago: Ballarat extends over parts of the Wadawurrung and Dja Dja Wurrung peoples' country - the ancestral land of modern indigenous people who remain connected to these places today.

Ballarat's urban heritage and diverse community is much more recent. Our city was born out of the hunt for gold, and one of the most important mass migrations of people in the 19th century during the 1850's gold rushes. Our city's magnificent built heritage, landmark buildings, parks and gardens, priceless statues, cultural and public institutions as well as many of our cultural values are a lasting legacy of this golden era.⁶

Today, Ballarat is on the verge of another golden era, with the population forecast to grow by more than 60% by 2040.⁷ This population growth presents both opportunities and challenges. Additionally, other factors that we cannot control such as environmental climate change and the impacts of globalisation will make us increasingly vulnerable to extreme weather events and market fluctuations.

Through the pilot programme with WHITRAP we have been able to use the historic urban landscape approach to guide our new long-term strategy for the future of Ballarat: *Today, tomorrow, together: the Ballarat Strategy. A greener, more vibrant and*



IMAGE 2 WADAWURRUNG ELDER, UNCLE BRYON POWELL, OPENS THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON THE HISTORIC URBAN LANDSCAPE APPROACH 'REVITALISING HISTORIC CITIES' IN BALLARAT WITH A TRADITIONAL SMOKING CEREMONY (2015).



IMAGE 3 PARTICIPATORY WORKSHOPS WITH THE COMMUNITY HAVE BEEN AN ESSENTIAL PART OF BALLARAT'S HISTORIC URBAN LANDSCAPE APPROACH

connected Ballarat. This strategy guides the future growth and development of Ballarat for the next forty years. It began with the largest community conversation that we have ever had. This engagement with our local citizens enabled us to understand what is valued: our city's unique character and heritage, our community's great lifestyle and strong sense of identity, our culture and natural landscape.

Throughout the strategy we have committed to launching from these values in our management of change, recognising 'Ballarat's unique historic, cultural and natural values as an integrated landscape of high value to the community'.⁸

Our cities are dynamic and living – they are not static and unchanging. It is up to us to make strong decisions so that we leave a robust legacy for future generations while building on what it is that makes our city's distinctive. The historic urban landscape approach requires us to integrate our practices and work with our citizens to reach a reasonable degree of consensus on what values and elements we want to transmit to future generations.⁹ We must understand the vulnerability of our cities and develop the frameworks and partnerships to ensure the coordinated management of change.

The pressures facing our historic cities are unprecedented. The historic urban landscape approach highlights the need for us to all work together across all levels of government, integrated through all disciplines, in collaboration with our local citizens and across nations to ensure that we have the best chance at a sustainable future. The support from UNESCO and WHITRAP has helped us take the first steps on this journey.

1 UNESCO (2013) *New life for historic cities: The historic urban landscape approach explained.*

Source: <http://historicurbanlandscape.com/themes/196/userfiles/download/2014/3/28/rymfqpmr54zyw5z.pdf>

2 City of Ballarat (2013) *Ballarat and UNESCO's historic urban landscape approach.*

Source: <http://historicurbanlandscape.com/themes/196/userfiles/download/2014/5/16/pinx8xzux8vsvcr.pdf>

3 For example: www.hulballarat.org.au

4 UNESCO (2011) *Recommendation on the historic urban landscape (VI.29).*

Source: http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=48857&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

5 City of Ballarat (2015) *Today, tomorrow, together: the Ballarat Strategy: A greener, more vibrant and connected Ballarat.*

6 City of Ballarat (2013) *Ballarat and UNESCO's historic urban landscape approach.*

Source: <http://historicurbanlandscape.com/themes/196/userfiles/download/2014/5/16/pinx8xzux8vsvcr.pdf>

7 City of Ballarat (2015) *Today, tomorrow, together: the Ballarat Strategy: A greener, more vibrant and connected Ballarat.*

8 Ibid.

9 WHITRAP. *HOW is the historic urban landscape approach applied?*

Source: <http://historicurbanlandscape.com/index.php?classid=5354&id=22&t=show>