

## **In the footsteps of Bakhtiari nomads**

Iran with approximately 82 million people is a multiethnic country with the largest population of nomads in the world. Today, the Bakhtiari tribe is the biggest nomadic group. Nomadic families walk the distance of 300 to 400 kilometers between summer camps in the Zagros mountains and winter camps in Khuzestan province every year with the main goal to feed their herds of goats and sheep in the green meadows of Zagros. They will walk back to Khuzestan for the winter period. This way of life remains almost untouched by modern life mainly for older generations of nomads however everything changes with a young generation of their kids who are intrigued by life behind the hills and valleys of the Zagros.

Hosain (55) and Johan (40), who are parents to five kids, continue to live the life that they got to know from their parents. They live this life voluntarily using the wisdom based on the tradition which is only in a few small aspects affected by modernity. Their kids were raised up during the migration and in just the same way of life as their parents did. As a result of political changes and the disruption of the notion of what it means to be a Bakhtiari even among nomads, their numbers are decreasing. *"Although it may seem that the number of nomads is declining due to the difficulty of this way of life and low income, the main reason is the lack of confidence among nomads, they feel backward, not belonging to the modern world. Only then comes the financial problem,"* Muhammad tried to explain to me while we walked exhausted towards the lunch break with one of the nomadic family who spontaneously invited us firstly for a tea and then rice with lentil and raisin.

Of course, nomads, as every group in society, are facing the changes in a fast-changing world however will still vital values of Bakhtiari's way of life stay alive or will nomads slowly fade away?